524 imitation of the webbed feet of a fowl. Done in quick tempo it becomes an acrobatic or a dancer's feat to sitters on chairs, but Burmans do it easily. We broke up into two teams and put out a prize cock in turn. The two cocks face each other and shuffle out their legs slowly to the rhythm of the accompanying verse: a slow and measured beat at first, then a sudden quickening with the acceleration of the rhythm, until at the crow given by the teams both go all out, quicker and quicker until one is exhaused and falls out vanquished. This is what we sang in chorus :

Kyet Hpa ta nyin	Two cocks, a fine pair
Taw go win	Walk in the forest dare
Maung Yin la, lay hmin pyit.	Comes Maung Yin and shoots with bow.
Ma pyit ba hmin,	O Maung Yin, don't shoot so,
Maung Yin yè	Styes will on your eyelids
Kyet-tet su tat tè.	grow.*
Bè beka su su	On the left eye, one two !
Nya beka su su	On the right eye, one two !
Khut laik gya so thu-ngè-gyin !	Come my friend then let us fight it !
Aw-ee-ee-uu !	Cock-a-doodle doo !
Nga do kyet hpa naing naing	Our cock will win it, win it !
Thu do kyet hpa shon shon.	Their cock will finish, finish !

Some of the games included forfeits, but the forfeits were of a broad comicality, dragging the victim by the ear, or if it happened to be one of the younger servants, rubbing soot on his face. Robbing stones from under the care of a guardian keeping watch over them within a circle was stealing the eggs from a mother tortoise; the postless figure in General Post was a *khway-yu*, mad dog; blind man's buff was *bok-ta-lon tauktè*, a tucktoo with a buff.

• 776 357 We spent a lot of time with A-Kyi and the men about the house. It was they who filled our world with bogies and spirits who were no less real to them than they were to us. We were warned not to be too greedy, or we would turn into *peik-tas* in the next existence, great tall spirits with voracious appetites and mouths the size of a needle's eye, or others with mouths like yawning caverns wide enough to swallow a pig, but no stomachs to receive the food. We were told that miserly and avaricious people would never be parted from their possessions which would follow them into their next existence, when they would be *ok-ta-sauk*, pictured for us as assuming the guise of fair girls with thanakha on their

[753] *There is a belief that styes are retribution for the killing of a cock.

faces and flowing hair, fair until they had enticed young men into the treasure dens when they would suddenly turn into old women. There were also *ta-says* who haunted human beings, *son-ma* witches who disguised themselves until they were ready to eat you, and *belus*, ogres which thrived on human beings. Far from the careful nurturing which is given to modern children of the West in attempts to prevent fears of the dark and loneliness, in Thanatpin I could have pointed out the actual tree in which the old witch lived, and when it grew dark both my nurse and I would shiver together in each other's arms at the thought of it.

Nor were the funny stories of the right type for Western children, though they made us roar with delight. There were two brothers who wanted to make their grandmother beautiful, and bathed her in the hottest water they could produce; the water was boiling and the grandmother emerged clean and fair and rigid, and the two grandsons dressed her up and propped her in the doorway for all to admire. There was also the monkey who from his perch in a tree above the bazaar shouted: "Whoever eats of the fruit of this tree will have fragrant gases in his body." One poor human fool believed him, and ate, and went around hawking his ware of fragrant gases. He came to the court of the king, who caused seven layers of curtains to shroud the chamber for fear any of the fragrance would be lost when the experiment was carried out. We laughed to tears at the account of the poor fool's discomfiture.

When we were to be given any medicines or had any pain, however, both my father and mother waited on us. We did not use Western medicines in the house. We always had stocks of various kinds of *yet-sa*, a linctus powder with digestive qualities containing liquorice and herbs in a salt base. The taste is pleasant to all Burmese people who eat it at the slightest provocation; excess of it causes no harm. There is a popular brand on the market called *lay-myo shit-sè*, 80 kinds of wind, but in addition to this, each family gets a specially prepared type from their family monk. My father, who was interested in herbal medicine, collected recipes and my mother compounded them at home. We ate yet-sa whenever we had a slight stomach ache or when my mother considered that the food had been too rich. For a general tonic my father got from the monk a honey mixture with special powers, partly owing to the holiness of the monk, and we ate a tiny spoonful of this each night after prayers. For coughs and sore throats we had pills, called *hpongyi-bo-sha-na*, from Moulmein. They were made of pepper, capsicum, liquorice and salt, and acted by stimulating the salivary and throat juices. All these medicines had a pleasant taste and we liked eating them, but when we had a fever we were given *ngan-say*, a black powder of herbs and salt, which was mixed with hot water and

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772 spirit knows no joy and no sorrow, but remains perpetually contemplating
775 the abstract truth, delivered finally from the cycle of recurring existences.

This arrangement of the universe and of the progress of man
772 through different levels of it, was but a reflection of the Buddhist ideas
779 of cosmography prevalent at the time when the religion was first in flower. In our imagination they belonged with the distant Himalayas, the peaks too high for human sight, the clouds and mist on which a being with the Buddha's spiritual powers could ride in majesty. But whether every Burman Buddhist associates these regions with his daily life or not, there are few who, in the midst of their busiest worldly living, will not be excited, exalted, at the Canonical descriptions of the mind of the *arahat* when he becomes, by meditation and victory over the senses, ready to attain Nirvana. The following description is part of the Sammannaphala-sutta, one of the discourses of the Buddha:

"With mind concentrated, purified, cleansed, spotless, with the defilements gone, supple, ready to act, firm, impassible, he directs his attention to knowledge and insight. He understands that this my body has a shape, consists of the four elements, was produced by a mother and father, a collection of milk and gruel, subject to rubbing, pounding, breaking, and dissolution, and on this my consciousness rests, hereto it is bound.

"He then directs his attention to creating a mind-formed body. From his body he creates a mind-formed body having shape, and with all its limbs and faculties.

"He directs his attention to various kinds of magical powers. From being one he becomes many, and from being many becomes one. He goes across walls and hills without obstruction, plunges into and out of the earth, goes over water as if on dry land, passes through the air sitting cross-legged, and even touches the mighty moon and sun with his hand, and reaches to the world of Brahma.

"With purified divine ea. he hears divine and human sounds both distant and near.

"He understands the state of the minds of other beings.

"The last three stages he attains are called the knowledges.

"First, the monk directs his attention to remembering his former existences. He remembers thousands of births and many cycles of existence, and knows that in such a place he was a being of such a name and clan, and had certain experiences and length of life in each of these births.

"Second, he directs his attention to the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings. With divine purified vision he sees evil doers being reborn in hell, and the virtuous in heaven, just as a man in a palace may see persons entering and coming out of a house.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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silks for their wives. The ordinary explanation is that every one can see what clothes you wear, while few people care to come and spy out what kind of a house you live in, and how you fare. But there can be very little doubt that the real reason is a survival of the idea of the old Yāzagaing, as well as the fact that long years of custom have impressed upon everybody the opinion that there are only two forms of architecture, the secular and the ecclesiastical, and no one, no matter how sure he might be that the Government would take no notice of his ambition, would brave the denunciations of the religious by adding a spire to his house, or even adorning the gable ends with carved pinnacles and flamboyant finials of the monasteries. Consequently the one regular form prevails everywhere.

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The Burman's dwelling, then, is always shaped more or less like a marquee tent, and never more than one storey high, to avoid the humiliating possibility of the feet of some one being over your head. But the whole house stands on posts, so that the floor is seven or eight feet from the ground. It consists often of only one room, usually, however, of two or more, and to the front of the house there is always a verandah, three or four feet lower than the general level of the house, and as often as not quite open to the street, or the garden, or whatever may be in front and always to the sky. The posts which form the main or central part of the house [551] are usually six in number, and all have their names, such as 353 Uyu, Kya-hngan, Nyaung-yan. The south post, in the • 776 main part of the house, the Thabye-taing, is the best known, as being always adorned with leaves and particularly marked as that in the top of which most probably lives the nat-spirit of the house. A dead body, after being swathed, and while [764] waiting for the coffin, is always placed by it.

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A house ought never to be built till the foundations have been thoroughly dug up and shown to a soothsayer. He will determine, from the substances found, whether it is a lucky place to build a house in or not. It stands to reason that the building cannot be commenced till a lucky day and hour have been sought out. There is considerable care to be observed in the selection of the timber. Posts are masculine, feminine, and neuter. Male posts are of equal size at both

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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yahanda, and attain Ne'ban. He is a favourite subject for pictures, which represent him sitting under his brazen roof, or on the stump of a tree, eating out of an alms-bowl, which he carries in his arms. Sometimes he is depicted gazing sideways up to the skies, where he seeks a place that is not polluted by corpses. Such a spot is not to be found on earth, where every stock and stone is but the receptacle of a departed spirit. The notion is like that of the Tibetan monks, who look upon the earth as simply a vast graveyard. They carry human finger-joints strung together for a rosary, eat their food out of a human skull, and instead of horns for trumpets use the bones of a man's forearm. "We are dead," they say, "and dead men have nothing to do with the things of the living."

Of a similar character to this illuminating of the pagodas, the town, and the river, is the letting loose of fire-balloons, from the end of Lent to the Tawadeintha festival in Tasaungmôn. The balloons are sometimes very big, but they are simple enough structures. A bamboo framework is covered over with the thick, coarse, home-made paper manufactured from the bark of the mahlaingbin (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), which also supplies the material for the black parabaik note-books. At the bottom, across the open mouth of the balloon, is a little platform, on which pitch is heaped, and with torches attached to it. The balloon is then tethered to the ground. The torches and resinous matter are lighted, and when the strain on the stays is considered sufficient, they are cut, and the balloon goes off. They are dangerous in large towns, and are forbidden there, but the Burman considers that the law applies only to the ground round the town, and dozens are let off every year from spots only a hundred yards or so outside of municipal limits. Not unseldom dôn, rockets, and other kinds of fire-works are attached to them, not by any means tending to make them safer for the houses below. This mi-eing byan, as it is called, is in honour of the Sula-mani payā, a pagoda erected in Tawadeintha, over Mount Myinmo, by the Thagya, king of the Nat-dêwas. When Prince Theidat left his palace, his wife, and forsook all to become a Buddha, he rode as far as the river Anawma and leaped over it on his famous

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CHAPTER XXII

NATS AND SPIRIT-WORSHIP

NOTWITHSTANDING that Buddhism has been the established religion in Burma since shortly after the third great council at Patalipootra in 241 B.C. (283 of the sacred era), and that the purest form of the faith exists, and is firmly believed in, yet, throughout the whole Ashe Pyi (the Eastern country), both in Upper and Lower Burma, the old geniolatry still retains a firm hold on the minds of the people. Missionaries say that it is a natural revolting of the human mind against the denial of the existence of a Supreme Being, superior to man, and controlling his destiny. Government officers assert that the retention of the prior religion (for it is undoubtedly a kind of second religion) is due to the fact that surrounding, and scattered about amongst the Buddhist Burmans, are numerous tribes—Karens, Kachins, and others—who have no form of belief but nat-worship, the reverencing of the spirits of nature. As a simple matter of fact, it is undeniable that the propitiating of the nats is a question of daily concern to the lower class Burman, while the worship at the pagoda is only thought of once a week. For the nat may prove destructive and hostile at any time, whereas the acquisition of kutho at the pagoda is a thing which may be set about in a business-like way, and at proper and convenient seasons. It is just the difference between avoiding a motor car and avoiding the circular saw in a timber mill.

Before proceeding further, it will be well to discuss the word "nat" itself. General Phayre and Bishop Bigandet did not finally settle whether Nat is derived from the Sanskrit term nath, meaning "master, husband, lord," or not. The

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question may be philologically interesting, but is not likely to be definitely settled till the languages of "Farther India" are better known. What concerns us is the fact that "nat" means in Burmese two distinct kinds of individuals. It may be applied to the inhabitants of the six inferior heavens, properly called dêwas, who figure in Hindu mythology, and have thence been transferred to the Buddhist world system. Kings and virtuous people are rewarded with happiness in these six seats after a good life upon earth. The Tha-gya min, the king of the nats, or dêwas, comes down to earth at the beginning of the Burman year, and remains here for three days, and his subjects generally display great solicitude for the pious state and welfare of mankind, but otherwise they are matters of no concern to dwellers in the lupyi unless as objects of envy. Perfectly distinct from these are the nats of the house, the air, the water, the forest,—the spirits of nature, fairies, elves, gnomes, kelpies, kobolds, pixies, whatever other names they have received in other countries. Burmans never have any confusion in their mind on the subject, such as may occasionally occur to a foreigner. The genii and peris of Eastern story, though doubtless springing from the Hindu dêwas, have no real analogy in Burmese literature, any more than the idea of the *devil*—etymologically connected with the word dév-a or dêwa—has anything to do with the joys of Tawadeintha and Tôtthita, the best-known heavens of nats of the superior order.

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The worship of nats, of the spirits, then, has nothing to do with Buddhism, and is denounced by all the more earnest of the pyin-sin as being heretical and antagonistic to the teachings of the Lord Buddha. King Mindôn, who was a true defender of the faith, and possessed of a deeper knowledge of the Pali texts than many of the members of the Assembly of the Perfect, fulminated an edict against the reverence paid to the nats, and ordered its discontinuance under severe penalties, but the worship was never really stopped, and can no more be stopped than refusing to dine thirteen at table, to walk under ladders, to cross knives, or to refrain from throwing spilt salt on other people's carpets.

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The term spirit-*worship* hardly conveys a proper notion. Even the Karens and Kachins, who have no other form of

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and little morsels of food. Often, if the village is larger, the shrine is much more pretentious, assuming almost the size and appearance of a zayat, a large tectum or roof, gabled and supported with red posts, the platform ornamented, and with a dais at one end, on which a representation of the nat is placed at the feast time, which, in imitation of the pagoda festivals, occurs at a regular fixed season. At other times these images are kept stowed away in an adjoining chamber, built for the purpose. It is particularly irritating to an educated Burman to see these absurd figures, which remind one of nothing so much as the fetiches of the prognathous African. Two gaudily dressed puppets, masquerading with spire-like crown, and royal, sharp-pointed swords, represent the much-feared nats, Shwe Pyin-gyi and Shwe Pyin-ngè, the Nyi-daw, Naung-daw, the Royal Younger Brother and the Royal Elder Brother, who command much respect in the neighbourhood of Mandalay and in Upper Burma generally. A still more dreaded spirit is one whose representation figures in a shrine at Tagaung, one of the ancient capitals of the country, half-way between Mandalay and Bhamaw. He appears simply as a head on a post, four feet high or thereabouts. A spire-like crown rests on his head, his eyes protrude and goggle in semi-globular wrath, asinine ears and a Punch-like nose complete the likeness, for he has no mouth, and his body is that of a dragon. Every one avoids his temple as much as possible, but the inhabitants of the village bow in that direction before they venture to do anything, and passing boatmen kindle lamps and offer flowers, of which he is said to be particularly fond, and fruit, for the nat has an incorrigible habit of giving people the stomach-ache when he is offended, and death punishes the recalcitrant. "Tagaung colic" is a recognised ailment with the Burmese faculty. The demon is said to have been one of the ancient kings of the place, who acquired his power from magical arts which he learned in Northern India. Three famous pagodas in the defile take their names from episodes in his life; and his two sons founded the dynasty of Prome. Oftenest of all, however, the nat-shrine contains no figure. It is occupied only by the viewless spirits of the air.

First in the list of personal spirits may be considered the

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First in the list of personal spirits may be considered the kosaung nats, a kind of confusion of ideas between the proper spirit and the butterfly spirit, and representing as it were the genius of each individual, a kind of materialised conscience. They are twelve in number, six good and six bad, six male and six female, and regulate the life and doings of their *protégé* accordingly as the benevolent or the malevolent gain the upper hand.

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Next to these comes the eing saung nat, very often called Min-magayi, the guardian nat of the house. For his comfort the tops of all the posts in the house are covered with a hood of white cotton cloth, for it is in this situation that he usually takes up his abode. In almost every house, at the end of the verandah in front, you will find a water-pot full of pareityé, water over which certain gathas, magic spells, or religious formulæ have been uttered by the astrologer, or the prior of the district. This water, which is replenished once a month, or oftener in cases of danger from disease, or when a member of the family is absent on a journey, is every now and then sprinkled about the house as a protection against bilus and spectres, ogres and tasés. When the water is consecrated in this nyaungye-o, which is of a special shape, something like an overgrown Indian spittoon, there are always a few twigs and leaves of the thabyé tree floating on the top. These are mostly taken out and hung round about the eaves, but occasionally left in the water. The inordinately superstitious sometimes keep a small thabyé bin (the sacred eugenia) growing in a pot in the house, so that its benign influence may keep harm away. Talaing houses may usually be known by the cocoa-nut hanging up at the south side of the building. This is covered with strips and tags of yellow or red cloth, and is offered to Min-magayi, whom they call the king of the nats. Of these spirits (called kaluk in their language) they say there are thirty-seven distinct varieties, but Min-magayi rules them all. These are the "thirty-seven nats of Burma," but whether they were borrowed by the Burmese from the Talaings or not seems at any rate doubtful. At the beginning of the wet season they always wrap up the cocoa-nut afresh, and when the rains are over make new offerings of money, glutinous rice, eggs, jaggari, and fruit, in order that the eing saung nat may

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keep away fever from the household. It must not be supposed that the nat guardian of the house has necessarily any affection for those who have built the place where he has taken up his abode. He probably regards them only with cold indifference, however generous they may be in their offerings, and were he not propitiated by these gifts he would almost certainly display his anger by doing the inhabitants some grievous injury. But then he dislikes his haunts being intruded upon, and if a stranger comes at an unwonted time—a burglar at midnight, for example—it is quite likely that the eing saung nat will attack him violently, scare him out of his wits, or give him the colic. Thus without any really estimable purpose in his mind, Min-magayi may be a considerable protection to his worshippers, just as an "awful example" is useful to teetotallers.

Beyond this guardian, or demon of the house, there is the guardian nat of the village, the ywa saung nat, of whose shrine at the end of the town I have already made mention. None of the lower-class Talaings would ever think of eating a morsel without first holding up his platter in the air, and breathing a prayer to the village nat. They are particularly fond of putting up shrines to the nats under the le'pan tree, from the wood of which coffins are frequently made. A feast must be held every three or four years in honour of this nat, at which the natkadaw, a woman called the nat's wife, dances. This is done in order that sickness may be kept away. Should an epidemic actually break out, a very elaborate ceremony is gone through. Probably first of all the figure of a spectre, or of a bilu, is painted on an ordinary earthenware water-pot, and this is solemnly smashed to pieces about sundown, with a heavy stick or a dah. As soon as it gets dark, the entire populace break out into yells, and make as much noise generally as they can compass, with the view of scaring away the evil spirit who has brought the disease. This is repeated on three several nights, and if it is not then effective the yahans are called in to give their assistance. The prior, with his following, repeat the Ten Precepts, chant the Payeit-gyi, and then one of the sermons of the Lord Buddha is declaimed, the same by the preaching of which he drove away the pestilence

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which was devastating the country of Wethali. If this last ceremony is not effectual the village is abandoned. The inhabitants leave the sick and the dying to their fate, and go off to the jungle, where each household camps out by itself for a time. Before they return again, the yellow-robed monks, in recognition of much alms, read the Law up and down the street between the houses. When they have gone back to the monastery, the nat's shrine is repaired, and abundant offerings deposited. Having thus made their peace with the representatives of both religions, the people return to their houses, light fires, cook rice for new offerings, and then enter upon their ordinary pursuits as if no interruption whatever had occurred.

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This is what would take place in any ordinary Burman village. But among the Talaings, and in the more retired places in the jungle, occupied by ignorant uncultivated Burmans, the function called ywakyathi would be carried out, which is much more purely geniolatric in its character. This is sometimes done when a prominent man in the hamlet is sick, more often when there is danger of a contagious disease. A great feast of cooked rice and meat, roasted fowls and ducks forming a prominent part of it, is heaped up on a platform specially erected for the purpose some distance outside the village. Everybody in the village is required to have some part in the ceremony. A few are sent out beforehand, who dress themselves up in a fantastic way, and pretend to be bilus, evil nats, and witches. With them are others who feign to be dogs, and rush about on all fours, barking and howling; others represent pigs, and grunt and nuzzle about with their noses in the ground. After this performance has been carried on for some time, the remainder of the villagers come out in a band, and, through one or more spokesmen, demand of the possessed whether those lying sick at home will recover, and whether the bad spirits are satisfied with the offerings. It is specially ordained at these exhibitions that no one shall be called by his real name; such mention, if made inadvertently, would expose the person addressed to considerable danger, even if he should make no sign betraying himself, for he certainly would not answer. The quasi tasés always reply that the

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sick will recover and the plague leave the locality. Thereupon the villagers rush off like madmen into the surrounding forest, and run about hither and thither in a reckless way with an open cloth, or the end of their waistcloth, in their hands. Some of them suddenly make a plunge with their cloth over a bush or a tussock of grass, and then closing it up carefully, hurry breathless back to the village. The leip-bya or "butterflies" of the sick man are supposed to have been captured. The paso, or cloth, is carefully opened and shaken over the patient's head, and the leip-bya is supposed to return to its proper habitation. This operation is repeated several times, in case a wrong "butterfly" might have been captured, or lest the actual one should have escaped on the way. Then everybody returns. The function is not without its danger, for it has happened that the [754] temporary mimes have become permanently possessed of evil spirits, and as witches and wizards have proved as great curses to the neighbourhood as any pestilence could have been. Which things are an allegory. The whole ceremony [178] is beginning to get into very bad odour in the more settled parts of the province, and respectable people avoid having anything to do with it, while those who have taken a part are ashamed to own it.

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All these nats are directly connected with a particular locality, and therefore well known to, and regularly propitiated by, the inhabitants of that place. But there are abundance of nats to be found elsewhere, away from villages and houses, and all of them equally ready to resent any injury which the passer-by may unwittingly do them. When a Burman starts on a journey he hangs a bunch of plantains, or a twig of the tha-bye tree, on the pole of the buffalo cart or the stern of the boat, to conciliate any spirit whose beat he may intrude upon. The fisherman makes offerings in his nat-sin every time he launches his dug-out; the lonely hunter in the forest deposits some rice and ties together a few leaves whenever he comes across some particularly large and imposing tree, lest there might be a thi'pin-saung nat dwelling there. Should there be none, the tied-back twigs will at any rate stand in evidence to the taw-saung nat, the demon who presides over all the forest.

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When there is a boat-race, the opposing crews have a preliminary row over the course with offerings placed on the prow for the nat who guards that stretch of the river. And so on through numberless examples. Some nats achieve fame, and are known far and wide by special appellations. Such is Maung In Gyi, a spirit who is feared in all the district round Rangoon, and away eastward and northward as far as Pegu. He lives in the water, and causes death. A special festival is celebrated in his honour, or rather in deprecation, in the month of Waso, the same in which Lent begins. Others more especially known in Upper Burma are Byindôn, Shwe Pyin-Gyi and his brother, and a drunkard nat called Maung Min Gyaw, to whom great quantities of rice spirit are offered. Uyingyi is a spirit universally known among the Talaings. The chief spirit of a district usually goes by the name of A-shin Gyi, the great lord, or, among the Talaings, Okkaya. Then there are generic names; there is the Hmin nat who lives in woods, and shakes those he meets so that they go mad. There is the Upaka, who flies about in the clouds to spy out men whom he may snap up. There is the Akakaso who lives in the tops of trees, Shekkaso who lives in the trunk, and Bumaso who is content with a dwelling in the roots. The presence of spirits or witches in trees may always be ascertained by the quivering and trembling of the leaves when all around are still.

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The Talaings, and many of the Burmans in the Irrawaddy delta, have a regular nat-feast just before harvesting begins. The figure of a woman is fashioned out of straw, and a tamein, kerchief, and other portions of female dress placed along with it in a bullock cart. Great quantities of kauk-hnyin, "sticky rice," are heaped up, and the whole driven in procession round the ripe paddy fields. The figure is then set up in the place where the paddy is to be stored, and the offerings are usually swept away by the boys of the place, whose appetites overcome their fear of the nats, Bumadi, the guardian of the earth, and Nagyi, the guardian of the grain, to propitiate whom the feast is held.

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There is a theory that persons who are executed or meet a violent death become nats and haunt the place where they

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776 769 were killed. They are called nat-sein. Advantage is taken of this to guard the capital. When a town is founded, at each of the four corners of the city walls and under the gate-posts people are buried alive. Their spirits thereafter hover about the place and bring disaster on strangers who come there with evil intentions. Monks and nuns who lead bad lives and break their vows are also believed to pass into demons when they die. There is therefore a constant and lamentable recruiting of the forces of the nats and tasés.

776 755 In some places certain nats have qualities ascribed to them which are not entirely obstructive and obnoxious. For example, in a nat's house at Nyaung-u, before the figure of a spirit called Apé Shwemyosin, lies a twisted, curious-shaped stone, which has magic powers ascribed to it. The sick come and try to lift it up. If they are successful they will soon recover health; if, on the other hand, its weight is too much for them, the inquirers will die. Similarly, on the ascent to Mandalay Hill there is a little chapel in which, besides three figures of the hentha, the Brahminy goose, each said to contain a sacred tooth brought from Ceylon, there is a flat, oval stone, with mystic characters inscribed on it. Many resort there to ascertain the probable issue of an intended journey or enterprise. If the stone proves heavy, the sign is bad.

787 The belief *in spirits naturally induces a corresponding* faith in omens. The Deitton, an astrological book constantly in the hands of Bedin Sayās, but carefully excluded from all monasteries, gives a great variety of them; auguries from the flight and number of birds seen, omens from the barking of dogs, the movements of bees, and the laying of eggs by fowls. Rules are given for choosing the site on which a house is to be built, and omens drawn from the substances found in digging the foundations. Posts are called male, female, or a-thet ma shi, neuter, according as they are of the same girth throughout, larger at the bottom or in the middle. Under ordinary circumstances, houses with female taing are fortunate, with neuter disastrous. Posts which are largest at the top are called taing bilu, "demon beams," and are especially unhappy.

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If a hen lays an egg upon a cloth, its owner will lose money. To come across mushrooms at the beginning of a journey is a most fortunate sign. A snake crossing the path always denotes delay, whether in a lawsuit, a journey, or a warlike expedition. If a dog carries an unclean thing up into his master's house, he may get thrashed for it, but the man will become rich; and so on in infinite variety. 787

All this belief in supernatural powers tends to produce abundance of experts who profess to be able to explain signs and to control the evil spirits. Every district possesses its nat thungè, or nat meimma, a spirit woman who dances at the nat feasts, and at ordinary times is consulted by the superstitious on all kinds of subjects connected with her trade. She is asked where so-and-so, lately deceased, is, to what seat of the world he has migrated; where absent persons are, and what they are doing; what facilities there are for special undertakings, and when they should be begun. 791

The Bedin Sayās claim similar knowledge, and are equally abundant. Numbers of them may be seen at any time of the day sitting under the trees on the way up to the Shwe Dagôn pagoda, writing and rubbing out figures and letters on their black note-books, and drawing a comfortable income from an unfailing succession of inquirers. Sometimes such a magic-worker, wishing to establish a reputation, or having a spite against somebody, performs the ceremony called pônnaga taikgyin. He carries off some cinders from the funeral pyres of people who have been burnt, and collecting a large assortment of such charred pieces of wood, puts them secretly in the house of the person whose feelings he wishes to work on. At night the spirits come and keep up a battery of stones on the unfortunate man's roof, all attempts to find out where the stones come from being as unavailing as they were in a similar instance in the suburbs of London not very long ago.

It is consolatory, however, to know that piety will protect any one from the attacks of malevolent spirits. Numerous stories told by the yahans prove the virtue of the gâtas to guard against evil. If the victim has only knowledge and strength of mind sufficient to recite these religious formulæ, 789 776

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the wiles of the nats are harmless. In case of the utmost need, even the ordinary tharana-gôn, the payā, tayā, thengā, is of much avail, if only uttered with faith. It is with the idea of keeping away bilus, tasés, and demons that the members of the yellow robe are often summoned to death-beds. There is no thought of the monk administering spiritual consolation to the dying man. The good influence of his pious presence keeps away evil spirits, and nothing more. No exhortations of the yahan can alter the balance of merit and demerit which is already cast up for the dying man. On the other hand, in out-of-the-way parts of the country, and especially in the hills, spirit shrines are not unseldom found actually inside a monastery compound.

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536 devoted to scenes at court, and is adorned with a throne, golden umbrellas, and other royal insignia. The other extremity represents, with artfully-arranged twigs and tufts of grass, the jungle and forests to which, during some part of every play, the prince and princess are sure to have to fly. The puppets, which are frequently as much as two or three feet high, are always gorgeously and expensively dressed. [532] The larger ones are all cut in wood, and the carver's skill often turns out very clever presentments of rugged-faced old men and exuberantly jovial lubyets. Most of the zāts, 536 ●776 which deal greatly with the supernatural and fabulous, are only represented as yôkthe pwès. No amount of technical skill could represent in the public streets an athurein, a creature (destined incalculable ages hence to be a Budh) whose height is a few thousand miles, and who produces eclipses in his play by taking the sun or moon in his fingers or between his toes.

536 Curious as it may seem, the puppet players often acquire a far more really personal reputation than the legitimate actors. The zatthama mostly get a name for dancing as much as for anything else. The Yindaw Ma Le, who came from a village near Meiktila in Upper Burma, indeed, was equally celebrated for her voice and her graceful movements, but the yokthethama become renowned for dramatic fervour, for tender passion, for dry wit, just as thoroughly and personally as if they actually appeared before the audience. Except the *prima donna* just alluded to (now dead) there are few professionals celebrated on the stage who are not far better known as first-class marionette players. These per- [562] formers are all men and boys. None of the female parts are ever taken by women. Maung Tha Byaw was unequalled in "prince's" parts. He was recognised as Thabinwun; every stage-manager, every zat-ôk in the country received his word as law. No tenor with a *voce fenomenale*, no bird-voiced Patti, was more sought after nor received with greater honours. His name became a proverb in the mouths of people who never heard him. "Tha Byaw Hé," a Mergui man will say when he makes a marvellous haul of fish or gets a super-excellent cheroot. A journey of his to Rangoon produced a popular saw, corresponding to the English "kill-

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774 827 blood is feverish or excited in any way, the butterfly necessarily becomes restless, and wanders about more or less rapidly and into more or less strange places, according to the degree of perturbation. Therefore it happens that the soul thus existing in itself, and straying or flying at random, sees extremely strange and fantastic visions on these voyages. An elaboration of this notion divides dreams into three special varieties: those which occur at the beginning of sleep, those about midnight, and those in the early morning; or the false, the mixed, and the true. Bedin-sayăs and wise women are for this reason always very particular in their inquiries as to the precise time at which the dream occurred. If they foretell wrongly it is, of course, because the questionist made a mistake as to the time when his vision appeared to him.

774 776 These night wanderings of the butterfly spirit are not without their dangers. In addition to other hobgoblins and spectres, Burma is especially plagued by evil spirits called bilus—creatures in human guise who devour men. If they will eat the corporate man, there is small doubt what will happen to the fragile butterfly spirit should it come across such an ogre. Cases do happen when the leip-bya is gulped down, and then the man has slept his last sleep. More often, however, it is only a case of leip-bya lan; the soul is scared, and in its terror sometimes runs into unknown regions, from which it is unable to retrace its steps, when of course it dies and with it the owner; or it rushes home to its bodily dwelling-place with such precipitation that the whole system is disorganised and sickness follows. This butterfly theory, 753 757 therefore, offers a grand field for quack doctors, of whom there are unfortunately a very large number in Burma. When a man falls ill they dose him with all the drugs and simples they have in their little bamboo phials. If he does not get better after taking even the fungus from the roots of the bamboo, culled in the eclipse, or vegetable soot prepared at the change of the moon, then there can be only one opinion; the leip-bya has had its system shaken by some ghoulish sight; or perhaps it is being kept in durance vile by some tàsé, some demon (in the sense of the Greek *δαίμων*), or by a sôn, a wizard. In this case no bodily medicine can be of any use, were it even that celebrated

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The following are a few prescriptions for whitlow and bad sores from a Maulmein doctor's books :— 755

1. The " hand " of a tauk-tè, the big trout-spotted gekko, that haunts old trees and the thatch of houses ; or, more probably, a bit of the stem of an epiphyte called the tauk-tè's hand.
2. Sulphur.
3. The bulb of a white lily.
4. A chilli roasted.
5. Cock's dung.

Mix in equal parts, and stir while heating it, and finally add some earth oil.

Again : Take a sufficient quantity of cock's dung, add to it a small quantity of copperas, pound them well together, and then mix with earth oil and some sesamum oil.

Seven or eight dry seeds of dankwè (*Cassia fœtida*), well bruised, and then intimately mixed with a little congee (rice water), with " sufficient " earth oil added, also proves a very effective remedy.

The bedin sayā's books are partly written, partly filled, with magic figures and pictures. The squares are all formed in accordance with the ordinary Hindoo law. When the wise man is asked questions, he keeps writing down numbers and characters on his parabaik tablets and rubbing them out, chanting to himself all the time. Sometimes he shakes cowries and seeds together, and when they fall out, decides from their position which of the pictures or rhymes in his book is to be consulted. Each of these gives its own answer, but they are not always as definite in their character as is desirable. The sayā always speaks in the declamatory monotone of the linga. 755 787 776

The following are the names of some of the familiar spirits and their likenesses :—

Upadana Pyuda, a spirit who lives under the earth and protects the husbandman. When he comes above ground he rides on a serpent. The inquiring farmer whose cowrie refers to this picture is most fortunate.

Sadi Wazadat, a wild figure galloping on a horse. This means failure of the attempt.

Saka Bada, a monkey mounted on a goat. Denotes fertility of mind.

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In another picture a crow is represented breaking a vessel full of money with its beak. Close at hand are a man and woman embracing one another. This denotes loss.

A man and his wife represented dancing together signify great gifts to the pagoda.

Another picture, which represents a husband and wife standing together in front of a house, with a horse and cow near it, denotes that the child to whom this picture may refer will be a farmer.

Near the picture of a dog, which one man holds by the tail while another hits it on the head, is written: "When the lot falls here, be not boastful, but humble; avoid pride and assumption, for that will only raise up enemies for you."

The following are some spells:—

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Take this amulet (a piece of bone carved rudely square, and with mystic figures on it), put your foot up against a thabye tree, and repeat the Ittipithaw (a form of worship in learning which one spends four or five months in the monasteries) thirty-seven times. Then you will be able to turn any given man into a ghost and make him do as you please.

Take the stalk of a betel leaf in your hand. Repeat "Ôm padan rupa wari thwa ha" seven times, and then throw the stalk at the person. He or she is sure then to listen to what you say.

The following is a charm to cause a dream about your lady-love:—Get an exact likeness of her made. Find out the hour and day on which she was born, her name and exact age. Then having begged permission from the guardian spirit of both the houses (your own and hers), chant as follows: "O Thurathadi, fairest goddess of flowers, daughter of nats most high, grant most graciously all that I desire of thee: tasa machan: without keeping back the least remainder; without withdrawing a single joy: prithee do this without fail, sweet goddess of woodland love." Repeat this seven times before the figure. Then go to sleep.

14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
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goes on throughout the morning. About 2 P.M. a monk gives a sermon and recites prayers. One of the elders reads aloud to the assemblage an account of the expenditures for the gifts to the monks, concluding the event. 796 735

Animistic and Magical Beliefs

Underlying the elaborate organization and practice of Buddhism, there is a considerable belief in nats, or spirits, and magic. Spirit worship, supposedly contrary to the teachings of Buddhism and opposed by the monks, is indulged in to varying degrees by the villagers. In Tadagale one frequently comes upon small wooden box-like structures affixed to trees, on which there is usually a little food and perhaps a flower as offerings to a particular nat. There seems little doubt that animism was even more important among the Burmese prior to the coming of Buddhism centuries ago. As noted in the description of initiation and wedding ceremonies earlier, nat worship has become interwoven with Buddhist beliefs and practices. It is also manifested in beliefs concerning guardian spirits of houses and particular places and in theories of the causes of many illnesses, including bewitchment and mental disturbances. Mediums, specially versed in the ways of the nats and possessing knowledge of cures for spirit-caused maladies, may be called upon for assistance. 776 755 782

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seemed to me a mystery such as I could not understand. But when I went to the people, I found that it was simple enough to them; for I found that they remembered their former lives often, that children, young children, could tell who they were before they died, and remember details of that former existence. As they grew older the remembrance grew fainter and fainter, and at length almost died away. But in many children it was quite fresh, and was believed in beyond possibility of a doubt by all the people. So I saw that the teachings of their sacred books and the thoughts of the people were not at one in this matter.

Again, I read that there was no God. Nats there were, spirits of great power like angels, and there was the Buddha (the just man made perfect), who had worked out for all men the way to reach surcease from evil; but of God I saw nothing. And because the Buddha had reached heaven (Nirvana), it would be useless to pray to him. For, having entered into his perfect rest, he could not be disturbed by the sharp cry of those suffering below; and if he heard, still he could not help; for each man must through pain and sorrow work out for himself his own salvation. So all prayer is futile.

And then I remembered I had seen the young mother going to the pagoda on the hilltop with a little offering of a few roses or an orchid spray, and pouring out her soul in passionate supplication to Someone — Someone unknown to her sacred books — that her firstborn might recover of his fever, and be to her once more the measureless

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776 delight of her life; and it would seem to me that
779 she must believe in a God and in prayer after all.
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So though I found much in these books that
771 was believed by the people, and much that was
779 to them the guiding influence of their lives, yet I
182 was unable to trust to them altogether, and I was in doubt where to seek for the real beliefs of these people. If I went to their monks, their holy men, the followers of the great teacher, Gaudama, they referred me to their books as containing all that a Buddhist believed; and when I pointed out the discrepancies, they only shook their heads, and said that the people were an ignorant people and confused their beliefs in that way.

779 When I asked what was a Buddhist, I was told
795 that, to be a Buddhist, a man must be accepted into
182 the religion with certain rites, certain ceremonies, he must become for a time a member of the community of the monks of the Buddha, and that a Buddhist was he who was so accepted, and who thereafter held by the teachings of the Buddha.

But when I searched the life of the Buddha, I could not find any such ceremonies necessary at all. So that it seemed that the religion of the Buddha was one religion, and the religion of the Buddhists another; but when I said so to the monks, they were horror-struck, and said that it was because I did not understand.

114 In my perplexity I fell back, as we all must, to
182 my own thoughts and those of my own people; and
779 I tried to imagine how a Burman would act if he
101 came to England to search into the religion of the English and to know the impulses of our lives.

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000 sympathy like the sympathy of the hills and streams; and sympathy comes from life. There is no sympathy with the dead.

When you are alone in the forest all this life will come and talk to you, if you are quiet and understand. There is love deep down in the passionate heart of the flower, as there is in the little quivering honey-sucker flitting after his mate, as there was in Romeo long ago. There is majesty in the huge brown precipice greater than ever looked from the face of a king. All life is one. The soul that moves within you when you hear the deer call to each other far above you in the misty meadows of the night is the same soul that moves in everything about you. No people who have lived much with Nature have failed to descry this. They have recognized the life, they have felt the sympathy of the world about them, and to this life they have given names and forms as they would to friends whom they loved. Fairies and goblins, fauns and spirits, these are but names and personifications of a real life. But to him who has never felt this life, who has never been wooed by the trees and hills, these things are but foolishness, of course.

776 To the Burman, not less than to the Greek of long ago, all nature is alive. The forest and the river and the mountains are full of spirits, whom the Burmans call Nats. There are all kinds of Nats, good and bad, great and little, male and female, now living round about us. Some of them live in the trees, especially in the huge fig-tree that shades half an acre without the village; or among the fern-like fronds of the tamarind; and you will often see

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beneath such a tree, raised upon poles or nestled in the branches, a little house built of bamboo and thatch, perhaps two feet square. You will be told when you ask that this is the house of the Tree-Nat. Flowers will be offered sometimes, and a little water or rice maybe, to the Nat, never supposing that he is in need of such things, but as a courteous and graceful thing to do; for it is not safe to offend these Nats, and many of them are very powerful. There is a Nat of whom I know, whose home is in a great tree at the crossing of two roads, and he has a house there built for him, and he is much feared. He is such a great Nat that it is necessary when you pass his house to dismount from your pony and walk to a respectful distance. If you haughtily ride past trouble will befall you. A friend of mine riding there one day rejected all the advice of his Burmese companions and did not dismount, and a few days later he was taken deadly sick of fever. He very nearly died, and had to go away to the Straits for a sea-trip to take the fever out of his veins. It was a very near thing for him. That was in the Burmese times, of course. After that he always dismounted. But all Nats are not so proud nor so much to be feared as this one, and it is usually safe to ride past.

Sometimes these Tree-Nats are given to throwing stones at houses near them, because they have taken a dislike to, or been insulted by, some dweller in the house. There is a lady I know who had a house in Maulmain, in the compound of which grew several magnificent trees, and Nats lived in them. For some reason or other these Nats took an enmity

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776 to the Burmese servant, and threw stones on the house, so that the lady and her husband could not sleep. For a time they could not discover the reason of this stone-throwing; but when the servant went away for a few days and the stoning stopped, it became apparent what the cause was. Directly he returned the stone-throwing became worse than ever, and as no means, though many were tried, were effectual in stopping it, it was necessary at last to dismiss the lad.

Even as I write, I am under the shadow of a tree where a Nat used to live, and the headman of the village has been telling me all about it. This is a government rest-house on a main road between two stations, and is built for government officials travelling on duty about their districts. To the west of it is a grand fig-tree of the kind called Nyaungbin by the Burmese. It is a very beautiful tree, though now a little bare, for it is just before the rains; but it is a great tree even now, and two months hence it will be glorious. It was never planted, the headman tells me, but came up of itself very many years ago, and when it was grown to full size a Nat came to live in it. This was in the king's time, of course. The Nat lived in the tree for many years, and took great care of it. No one might injure it or any living creature near it, so jealous was the Nat of his abode. And the villagers built a little Nat-house, such as I have described, under the branches, and offered flowers and water, and all things went well with those who did well. But if anyone did ill the Nat punished him. If he cut the roots of the tree the Nat hurt his feet, and if he

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injured the branches the Nat injured his arms; and if he cut the trunk the Nat came down out of the tree, and killed the sacrilegious man right off. There was no running away, because, as you know, the headman said, Nats can go a great deal faster than any man. Many men, careless strangers, who camped under the tree and then abused the hospitality of the Nat by hunting near his home, came to severe grief.

But the Nat has gone now, alas! The tree is still there, but the Nat has fled away these many years.

'I suppose he didn't care to stay,' said the headman. 'You see that the English government officials came and camped here, and didn't fear the Nats. They had fowls killed here for their dinner, and they sang and shouted; and they shot the green pigeons who ate his figs, and the little doves that nested in his branches.'

All these things were an abomination to the Nat, who hated loud, rough talk and abuse, and to whom all life was sacred.

So the Nat went away. The headman did not know where he was gone, but there are plenty of trees.

'He has gone somewhere to get peace,' the headman said. 'Somewhere in the jungle, where no one ever comes save the herd-boy and the deer, he will be living in a tree, though I do not think he will easily find a tree so beautiful as this.'

The headman seemed very sorry about it, and so did several villagers who were with him; and I suggested that if the Nat-houses were rebuilt, and

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776 flowers and water offered, the Nat might know and return. I even offered to contribute myself, that it might be taken as an *amende honorable* on behalf of the English government. But they did not think this would be any use. No Nat would come where there was so much going and coming, so little care for life, such a disregard for pity and for peace. If we were to take away our rest-house, well then, perhaps, after a time, something could be done, but not under present circumstances.

776 626 And so, besides dethroning the Burmese king, and occupying his golden palace, we are ousting from their pleasant homes the guardian spirits of the trees. They flee before the cold materialism of our belief, before the brutality of our manners. The headman did not say this; he did not mean to say this, for he is a very courteous man and a great friend of all of us; but that is what it came to, I think.

776 136 The trunk of this tree is more than ten feet through—not a round bole, but like the pillar in a Gothic cathedral, as of many smaller boles growing together; and the roots spread out into a pedestal before entering the ground. The trunk does not go up very far. At perhaps twenty-five feet above the ground it divides into a myriad of smaller trunks, not branches, till it looks more like a forest than a single tree; it is full of life still. Though the pigeons and the doves come here no longer, there are a thousand other birds flitting to and fro in their aerial city and chirping to each other. Two tiny squirrels have just run along a branch nearly over my head, in a desperate hurry apparently, their tails

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cocked over their backs, and a sky-blue chameleon is standing on the trunk near where it parts. There is always a breeze in this great tree; the leaves are always moving, and there is a continuous rustle and murmur up there. A mango-tree and tamarind near by are quite still. Not a breath shakes their leaves; they are as still as stone, but the shadow of the fig-tree is chequered with ever-changing lights. Is the Nat really gone? Perhaps not; perhaps he is still there, still caring for his tree, only shy now and distrustful, and therefore no more seen.

Whole woods are enchanted sometimes, and no one dare enter them. Such a wood I know, far away north, near the hills, which is full of Nats. There was a great deal of game in it, for animals sought shelter there, and no one dared to disturb them; nor the villagers to cut firewood, nor the girls seeking orchids, nor the hunter after his prey, dared to trespass upon that enchanted ground.

'What would happen,' I asked once, 'if anyone went into that wood? Would he be killed, or what?'

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And I was told that no one could tell what would happen, only that he would never be seen again alive. 'The Nats would confiscate him,' they said, 'for intruding on their privacy.' But what they would do to him after the confiscation no one seemed to be quite sure. I asked the official who was with me, a fine handsome Burman who had been with us in many fights, whether he would go into the wood with me, but he declined at once. Enemies are one thing, Nats are quite another, and a very much more dreadful thing. You can escape

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776 626 from enemies, as witness my companion, who had been shot at times without number and had only once been hit in the leg, but you cannot escape Nats. Once, he told me, there were two very sacrilegious men, hunters by profession, only more abandoned than even the majority of hunters, and they went into this wood to hunt. 'They didn't care for Nats,' they said. They didn't care for anything at all apparently. 'They were absolutely without reverence, worse than any beast,' said my companion.

So they went into the wood to shoot, and they never came out again. A few days later their bare bones were found, flung out upon the road near the enchanted wood. The Nats did not care to have even the bones of such scoundrels in their wood, and so thrust them out. That was what happened to them, and that was what might happen to us if we went in there. We did not go.

Though the Nats of the forest will not allow even one of their beasts to be slain, the Nats of the rivers are not so exclusive. I do not think fish are ever regarded in quite the same light as animals. It is true that a fervent Buddhist will not kill even a fish, but a fisherman is not quite such a reprobate as a [782] hunter in popular estimation. And the Nats think so, too, for the Nat of a pool will not forbid all fishing. You must give him his share; you must be respectful to him, and not offend him; and then he will fill your nets with gleaming fish, and all will go well with you. If not, of course, you will come to grief; your nets will be torn, and your boat upset; and finally, if obstinate, you will be drowned. A

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great arm will seize you, and you will be pulled under and disappear for ever.

A Nat is much like a human being; if you treat him well he will treat you well, and conversely. Courtesy is never wasted on men or Nats, at least so a Burman tells me.

The highest Nats live in the mountains. The higher the Nat the higher the mountain; and when you get to a very high peak indeed, like Mainthong Peak in Wuntho, you encounter very powerful Nats.

They tell a story of Mainthong Peak and the Nats there, how all of a sudden, one day in 1885, strange noises came from the hill. High up on his mighty side was heard the sound of great guns firing slowly and continuously; there was the thunder of falling rocks, cries as of someone bewailing a terrible calamity, and voices calling from the precipices. The people living in their little hamlets about his feet were terrified. Something they knew had happened of most dire import to them, some catastrophe which they were powerless to prevent, which they could not even guess. But when a few weeks later there came even into those remote villages the news of the fall of Mandalay, of the surrender of the king, of the 'great treachery,' they knew that this was what the Nats had been sorrowing over. All the Nats everywhere seem to have been distressed at our arrival, to hate our presence, and to earnestly desire our absence. They are the spirits of the country and of the people, and they cannot abide a foreign domination.

But the greatest place for Nats is the Popa Mountain, which is an extinct volcano standing all

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776 alone about midway between the river and the Shan
823 Mountains. It is thus very conspicuous, having no hills near it to share its majesty; and being in sight from all the old capitals, it is very well known in history and legend. It is covered with dense forest, and the villages close about are few. At the top there is a crater with a broken side, and a stream comes flowing out of this break down the mountain. Probably it was the denseness of its forests, the abundance of water, and its central position, more
[519] than its guardian Nats, that made it for so many years the last retreating-place of the half-robber, half-patriot bands that made life so uneasy for us. But the Nats of Popa Mountains are very famous.

776 When any foreigner was taken into the service
695 of the King of Burma he had to swear an oath of
823 fidelity. He swore upon many things, and among them were included 'all the Nats in Popa.' No Burman would have dared to break an oath sworn in such a serious way as this, and they did not imagine that anyone else would. It was and is a very dangerous thing to offend the Popa Nats; for they are still there in the mountain, and everyone who goes there must do them reverence.

776 A friend of mine, a police officer who was en-
823 gaged in trying to catch the last of the robber chiefs
[782] who hid near Popa, told me that when he went up the mountain shooting, he, too, had to make offerings. Some way up there is a little valley dark with overhanging trees, and a stream flows slowly along it. It is an enchanted valley, and if you look closely you will see that the stream is not as other streams, for it flows uphill. It comes rushing into

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the valley with a great display of foam and froth, and it leaves in a similar way, tearing down the rocks, and behaving like any other boisterous hill rivulet; but in the valley itself it lies under a spell. It is slow and dark, and has a surface like a mirror, and it flows uphill. There is no doubt about it; anyone can see it. When they came here, my friend tells me, they made a halt, and the Burmese hunters with him unpacked his breakfast. He did not want to eat then, he said, but they explained that it was not for him, but for the Nats. All his food was unpacked, cold chicken and tinned meats, and jam and eggs and bread, and it was spread neatly on a cloth under a tree. Then the hunters called upon the Nats to come and take anything they desired, while my friend wondered what he should do if the Nats took all his food and left him with nothing. But no Nats came, although the Burmans called again and again. So they packed up the food, saying that now the Nats would be pleased at the courtesy shown to them, and that my friend would have good sport. Presently they went on, leaving, however, an egg or two and a little salt, in case the Nats might be hungry later, and true enough it was that they did have good luck. At other times, my friend says, when he did not observe this ceremony, he saw nothing to shoot at all, but on this day he did well.

The former history of all Nats is not known. Whether they have had a previous existence in another form, and if so, what, is a secret that they usually keep carefully to themselves, but the history of the Popa Nats is well known. Everyone who

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776 lives near the great hill can tell you that, for it all happened not so long ago. How long exactly no one can say, but not so long that the details of the story have become at all clouded by the mists of time.

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539 They were brother and sister, these Popa Nats, and they had lived away up North. The brother was a blacksmith, and he was a very strong man. He was the strongest man in all the country; the blow of his hammer on the anvil made the earth tremble, and his forge was as the mouth of hell. No one was so much feared and so much sought after as he. And as he was strong, so his sister was beautiful beyond all the maidens of the time. Their father and mother were dead, and there was no one but those two, the brother and sister, so they loved each other dearly, and thought of no one else. The brother brought home no wife to his house by the forge. He wanted no one while he had his sister there, and when lovers came wooing to her, singing amorous songs in the amber dusk, she would have nothing to do with them. So they lived there together, he growing stronger and she more beautiful every day, till at last a change came.

The old king died, and a new king came to the throne, and orders were sent about to all the governors of provinces and other officials that the most beautiful maidens were to be sent down to the Golden City to be wives to the great king. So the governor of that country sent for the blacksmith and his sister to his palace, and told them there what orders he had received, and asked the blacksmith to give his sister that she might be sent as

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queen to the king. We are not told what arguments the governor used to gain his point, but only this, that when he failed, he sent the girl in unto his wife, and there she was persuaded to go. There must have been something very tempting, to one who was but a village girl, in the prospect of being even one of the lesser queens, of living in the palace, the centre of the world. So she consented at last, and her brother consented, and the girl was sent down under fitting escort to find favour in the eyes of her king. But the blacksmith refused to go. It was no good the governor saying such a great man as he must come to high honour in the Golden City, it was useless for the girl to beg and pray him to come with her—he always refused. So she sailed away down the great river, and the blacksmith returned to his forge.

As the governor had said, the girl was acceptable in the king's sight, and she was made at last one of the principal queens, and of all she had most power over the king. They say she was most beautiful, that her presence was as soothing as shade after heat, that her form was as graceful as a young tree, and the palms of her hands were like lotus blossoms. She had enemies, of course. Most of the other queens were her enemies, and tried to do her harm. But it was useless telling tales of her to the king, for the king never believed; and she walked so wisely and so well, that she never fell into any snare. But still the plots never ceased.

There was one day when she was sitting alone in the garden pavilion, with the trees making moving shadows all about her, that the king came to her.

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They talked for a time, and the king began to speak to her of her life before she came to the palace, a thing he had never done before. But he seemed to know all about it, nevertheless, and he spoke to her of her brother, and said that he, the king, had heard how no man was so strong as this blacksmith, the brother of the queen. The queen said it was true, and she talked on and on and praised her brother, and babbled of the days of her childhood, when he carried her on his great shoulder, and threw her into the air, catching her again. She was delighted to talk of all these things, and in her pleasure she forgot her discretion, and said that her brother was wise as well as strong, and that all the people loved him. Never was there such a man as he. The king did not seem very pleased with it all, but he said only that the blacksmith was a great man, and that the queen must write to him to come down to the city, that the king might see him of whom there was such great report.

Then the king got up and went away, and the queen began to doubt; and the more she thought the more she feared she had not been acting wisely in talking as she did, for it is not wise to praise anyone to a king. She went away to her own room to consider, and to try if she could hear of any reason why the king should act as he had done, and desire her brother to come to him to the city; and she found out that it was all a plot of her enemies. Herself they had failed to injure, so they were now plotting against her through her brother. They had gone to the king, and filled his ear with

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slanderous reports. They had said that the queen's brother was the strongest man in all the kingdom. 'He was cunning, too,' they said, 'and very popular among all the people; and he was so puffed up with pride, now that his sister was a queen, that there was nothing he did not think he could do.' They represented to the king how dangerous such a man was in a kingdom, that it would be quite easy for him to raise such rebellion as the king could hardly put down, and that he was just the man to do such a thing. Nay, it was indeed proved that he must be disloyally plotting something, or he would have come down with his sister to the city when she came. But now many months had passed, and he never came. Clearly he was not to be trusted. Any other man whose sister was a queen would have come and lived in the palace, and served the king and become a minister, instead of staying up there and pretending to be a blacksmith.

The king's mind had been much disturbed by this, for it seemed to him that it must be in part true; and he went to the queen, as I have said, and his suspicions had not been lulled by what she told him, so he had ordered her to write to her brother to come down to the palace.

The queen was terrified when she saw what a mistake she had made, and how she had fallen into the trap of her enemies; but she hoped that the king would forget, and she determined that she would send no order to her brother to come. But the next day the king came back to the subject, and asked her if she had yet sent the letter, and she said 'No!' The king was very angry at this

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disobedience to his orders, and he asked her how it came that she had not done as he had commanded, and sent a letter to her brother to call him to the palace.

Then the queen fell at the king's feet and told him all her fears that her brother was sent for only to be imprisoned or executed, and she begged and prayed the king to leave him in peace up there in his village. She assured the king that he was loyal and good, and would do no evil.

The king was rather abashed that his design had been discovered, but he was firm in his purpose. He assured the queen that the blacksmith should come to no harm, but rather good; and he ordered the queen to obey him, threatening her that if she refused he would be sure that she was disloyal also, and there would be no alternative but to send and arrest the blacksmith by force, and punish her, the queen, too. Then the queen said that if the king swore to her that her brother should come to no harm, she would write as ordered. *And the king swore.*

So the queen wrote to her brother, and adjured him by his love to her to come down to the Golden City. She said she had dire need of him, and she told him that the king had sworn that no harm should come to him.

The letter was sent off by a king's messenger. In due time the blacksmith arrived, and he was immediately seized and thrown into prison to await his trial.

When the queen saw that she had been deceived, she was in despair. She tried by every way, by

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tears and entreaties and caresses, to move the king, but all without avail. Then she tried by plotting and bribery to gain her brother's release, but it was all in vain. The day for trial came quickly, and the blacksmith was tried, and he was condemned and sentenced to be burnt alive by the river on the following day.

On the evening of the day of trial the queen sent a message to the king to come to her; and when the king came reluctantly, fearing a renewal of entreaties, expecting a woman made of tears and sobs, full of grief, he found instead that the queen had dried her eyes and dressed herself still more beautifully than ever, till she seemed to the king the very pearl among women. And she told the king that he was right, and she was wrong. She said, putting her arms about him and caressing him, that she had discovered that it was true that her brother had been plotting against the king, and therefore his death was necessary. It was terrible, she said, to find that her brother, whom she had always held as a pattern, was no better than a traitor; but it was even so, and her king was the wisest of all kings to find it out.

The king was delighted to find his queen in this mood, and he soothed her and talked to her kindly and sweetly, for he really loved her, though he had given in to bad advice about the brother. And when the king's suspicions were lulled, the queen said to him that she had now but one request to make, and that was that she might have permission to go down with her maids to the river-shore in the early morning, and see herself the execution of her

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traitor brother. The king, who would now have granted her anything—anything she asked, except just that one thing, the life of her brother—gave permission; and then the queen said that she was tired and wished to rest after all the trouble of the last few days, and would the king leave her. So the king left her to herself, and went away to his own chambers.

Very early in the morning, ere the crimson flush upon the mountains had faded in the light of day, a vast crowd was gathered below the city, by the shore of the great river. Very many thousands were there, of many countries and peoples, crowding down to see a man die, to see a traitor burnt to death for his sins, for there is nothing men like so much as to see another man die.

Upon a little headland jutting out into the river the pyre was raised, with brushwood and straw, to burn quickly, and an iron post in the middle to which the man was to be chained. At one side was a place reserved, and presently down from the palace in a long procession came the queen and her train of ladies to the place kept for her. Guards were put all about to prevent the people crowding; and then came the soldiers, and in the midst of them the blacksmith; and amid many cries of 'Traitor, traitor!' and shouts of derision, he was bound to the iron post within the wood and the straw, and the guards fell back.

The queen sat and watched it all, and said never a word. Fire was put to the pyre, and it crept rapidly up in long red tongues with coils of black

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smoke. It went very quickly, for the wood was very dry, and a light breeze came laughing up the river and helped it. The flames played about the man chained there in the midst, and he made never a sign; only he looked steadily across at the purple mountain where his home lay, and it was clear that in a few more moments he would be dead. There was a deep silence everywhere.

Then of a sudden, before anyone knew, before a hand could be held out to hinder her, the queen rose from her seat and ran to the pyre. In a moment she was there and had thrown herself into the flames, and with her arms about her brother's neck she turned and faced the myriad eyes that glared upon them—the queen, in all the glory of her beauty, glittering with gems, and the man with great shackled bare limbs, dressed in a few rags, his muscles already twisted with the agony of the fire. A great cry of horror came from the people, and there was the movement of guards and officers rushing to stop the fire; but it was all of no use. A great flash of red flames came out of the logs, folding these twain like an imperial cloak, a whirl of sparks towered into the air, and when one could see again the woman and her brother were no longer there. They were dead and burnt, and the bodies mingled with the ashes of the fire. She had cost her brother his life, and she went with him into death.

Some days after this a strange report was brought to the palace. By the landing-place near the spot where the fire had been was a great fig-tree. It

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was so near to the landing-place, and was such a magnificent tree, that travellers coming from the boats, or waiting for a boat to arrive, would rest in numbers under its shade. But the report said that something had happened there. To travellers sleeping beneath the tree at night it was stated that two Nats had appeared, very large and very beautiful, a man Nat and a woman Nat, and had frightened them very much indeed. Noises were heard in the tree, voices and cries, and a strange terror came upon those who approached it. Nay, it was even said that men had been struck by unseen hands and severely hurt, and others, it was said, had disappeared. Children who went to play under the tree were never seen again: the Nats took them, and their parents sought for them in vain. So the landing-place was deserted, and a petition was brought to the king, and the king gave orders that the tree should be hewn down. So the tree was cut down, and its trunk was thrown into the river; it floated away out of sight, and nothing happened to the men who cut the tree, though they were deadly afraid.

The tree floated down for days, until at last it stranded near a landing-place that led to a large town, where the governor of these parts lived; and at this landing-place the portents that had frightened the people at the great city reappeared and terrified the travellers here too, and they petitioned the governor.

The governor sought out a great monk, a very holy man learned in these matters, and sent him to inquire, and the monk came down to the tree and

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spoke. He said that if any Nats lived in the tree, they should speak to him and tell him what they wanted. 'It is not fit,' he said, 'for great Nats to terrify the poor villagers at the landing-place. Let the Nats speak and say what they require. All that they want shall be given.' And the Nats spake and said that they wanted a place to live in where they could be at peace, and the monk answered for the governor that all his land was at their disposal. 'Let the Nats choose,' he said; 'all the country is before them.' So the Nats chose, and said that they would have Popa Mountain, and the monk agreed.

The Nats then left the tree and went away, far away inland, to the great Popa Mountain, and took up their abode there, and all the people there feared and reverenced them, and even made to their honour two statues with golden heads and set them up on the mountain.

This is the story of the Popa Nats, the greatest Nats of all the country of Burma, the guardian spirits of the mysterious mountain. The golden heads of the statues are now in one of our treasuries, put there for safe custody during the troubles, though it is doubtful if even then anyone would have dared to steal them, so greatly are the Nats feared. And the hunters and the travellers there must offer to the Nats little offerings, if they would be safe in these forests, and even the young man must obtain permission from the Nats before he marry.

I think these stories that I have told, stories selected from very many that I have heard, will show what sort of spirits these are that the Burmese

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776 have peopled their trees and rivers with; will show what sort of religion it is that underlies, without influencing, the creed of the Buddha that they follow. It is of the very poetry of superstition, free from brutality, from baseness, from anything repulsive, springing, as I have said, from their innate sympathy with Nature and recognition of the life that works in all things. It always seems to me that beliefs such as these are a great key to the nature of a people, are, apart from all interest in their beauty, and in their akinness to other beliefs, of great value in trying to understand the character of a nation.

778 181 For to beings such as Nats and fairies the people who believe in them will attribute such qualities as are predominant in themselves, as they consider admirable; and, indeed, all supernatural beings are but the magnified shadows of man cast by the light of his imagination upon the mists of his ignorance.

Therefore, when you find that a people make their spirits beautiful and fair, calm and even-tempered, loving peace and the beauty of the trees and rivers, shrinkingly averse from loud words, from noises, and from the taking of life, it is because the people themselves think that these are great qualities. If no stress be laid upon their courage, their activity, their performance of great deeds, it is because the people who imagine them care not for such things. There is no truer guide, I am sure, to the heart of a young people than their superstitions; these they make entirely for themselves, apart from their religion, which is, to a certain extent, made for them. That is why I have written this chapter on Nats: not

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because I think it affects Buddhism very much one way or another, but because it seems to me to reveal the people themselves, because it helps us to understand them better, to see more with their eyes, to be in unison with their ideas—because it is a great key to the soul of the people.

cloth, small enough to keep mosquitos out. The other kind was made of plain cloth to keep out the smallest insects. The nets are rectangular for a single bed, square for a double. They are suspended over the bed on a wooden framework and tucked under the mattress. Pathus: three were used by the family and two kept in reserve. Each lasted 4 or 5 years. The reserve nets cost Rs. 60/- each, the others Rs. 40/- or 45/- each. Camp: one old one was brought from Pathus, this is used by U Myaing and his wife. The rest of the family have none. Two are desired.

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TA-BYET-SEE, broom: The hand broom is used to brush out dust and dirt from the floor of the house. It is about 2 feet long, 2 inches in diameter and consists of bast over bu nches of stiff reeds bound at the top by a more flexible reed strip. The one used in camp cost 12 annas in Rangoon.

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Burmese Concepts about the Home.

The following Burmese ideas about the home were secured mainly from Ko Maung Than, my research assistant.

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The Burmese regard the KIN-YAR (home place) with great love, and as the most essential feature of life. The head of a family will frequently admonish: "My young ones let us remain with our nest intact and our eggs uncrushed", this is also a common prayer. Th ideal is to preserve the family home with necessary repairs in its original form. Wooden (teak) houses are preferred to bamboo. The husband and wife are partners in the ownership of the home which they start at marriage. Indeed, the word for "marriage" KIN-DAUNG-PYU (House-separately-build) emphisize the importance of building a home upon starting a family. In villages the mother and children spend almost all of their time in and around the home. Since the Burmese are especially sedentary, short journeys being unusual and infrequent events, the house is the spot where he lives and dies. It is furthermore his "castle" and place of security within which he is "ruler".

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Each house is under the direct protection of MIN MAHA-GIRI one of the 37 major nats of Burma. He controls the fortunes of the family and in return is revered. A coconut, the symbol of MIN-

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342 MAHA-GIRI, is found in nearly every house (a junior member of a
●776 family Reed revers only the symbol of the senior member of a family).
782 A dried coconut with attachment stems is placed in a basket, the top wrapped with a KAUNG-BONG (Head-wrap) of red and white cloth streamers and the basket hung on a nail to the primary corner post of the house. It must be adjusted correctly, and periodically sprinkled with sandlewood water. An interesting story explains the use of the coconut symbol.

773 MAUNG TIN DE, a blacksmith of great powers had two beautiful sisters who he feared would be coveted by the king of the city in which they lived. He asked them for this reason to remain in seclusion. One day he returned from work to find them gone. He became very angry and pounded his anvil till the city shook and the people suffered from earache. For a while he eluded persuit but was finally caught and burned to death. Afterwards he became a powerful nat called MIN MAHA-GIRI with powers of protecting households. Since the coconut signifies coolness and thirst-quenching it came to be offered to the nat who had died from fire.

MIN MAHA-GIRI is consulted if sickness or other misfortunes visit the family. At such times the head of the family checks the coconut offering to make sure it is in good condition. If not this is remedied for much misfortune could be the result of MIN MAHA-GIRI's displeasure at being neglected. When a journey is contemplated he is also appealed to for protection. A lesser nat YON GIN O is in charge of the kitchen and more specifically the hearth. Ko Maung Than knew little of this
[563] nat since it is of minor importance or not considered in Mon households.

342 The home is very important as a place for socio-religious functions
[788] many ceremonies involving groups of people are observed or in part
[574] take place in the house (see below in socio-religious section). Social visiting is also common and much enjoyed. Hospitality, related to but differentiated from charity, gains merit for the host. There is a saying that visitors "come only when the home is pleasant."

512 The home, of course, performs a major "function" as a sleeping
805 place, and there are many beleifs and observances in connection with
513 sleep. The evening hours are divided into LU NYAT THET SEIK (children

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A village of 2000 persons may have 10 or more doctors. The more successful "move up" to the towns and cities. Most of the medicines are herbs and chemicals including roots, leaves, fruits, berries, salt, and sulphur. Many of the herbs are imported from India. Parts of animals such as crocodile skin, pig and horse droppings are used less frequently. The doctor must be a moral man of good character or the medicine will not be effective. He uses the right index finger "medical finger" to stir the concoctions. The family of the sick person may either prepare the medicine themselves from the doctor's directions or take HI's on special preparations. Many cures are effected by regulating diet, and in most cases this plays an important part in the cure. The knowledge which the SAY-SAYA must command is extensive including not only the medic' wisdom of the ages but also the peculiarities of the patient and above all the relationship of the seasons (weather conditions) to the case.

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If one doctor fails to cure, another may be called in after dismissing the first. A keen feeling of rivalry exists between the various doctors and there are no cooperative consultations. Although each prides himself on a specialty the secrets of which he jealously guards he feels qualified also to handle any other medical problems. "If two are of the same thoughts, they are enemies" emphasizes the general attitude of competition seen in many other phases of Burmese life. The Burmese doctors are invariably applied to for help first. If this does not succeed modern midicinal facilities are sought. If modern medicine fails it is greatly derided. Maung Maung Than's aunt was ill for a long time and, after consulting many Burmese specialists she was taken to the Rangoon Mission Hospital where her case was diagnosed as advanced breast cancer beyond cure. His uncle, though not a medical man, is recognized as a last resort specialist who when the patient is beyond any other help administers lime juice (ordinarily fatal where fever is involved) in a "do or die" treatment. He is warned off when he appears at a sick house for the risk often does not pay off.

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Illness is frequently caused by supernatural spirits acting either independently or as agents for "black magic" specialists.

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The Buddhas are, of course, above earthly contacts and their helpers the THAMA DEWA (heavenly-nats) function only as judges in the after-world - although they may counsel the living, as a "conscience", on right living. The MESA-DAMA (earth-nats) on the other hand are major force. f this world. There are 37 major nats each with a characteristic appearance (in human form) and personality. Each has an origin legend involving a story of a human of extraordinary characteristics who met death in an unusual fashion and remained on earth to complicate men's affairs. Most have properties of guardian spirits who if their needs are attended to will protect the interests of a community or special group mainly by refraining from doing harm.

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Nats' powers for good include protecting the village from dacoit attacks but does not extend to modern warfare. When the Japanese armies were slicing up through Tenasserim in 1941, the elders of Maung Maung Than's village prayed for nat protection against the invaders. The nats replied "Dear Villagers we ourselves are wearing raised longyis in this crisis (ready to run)." This is a Rangoon town joke told among the sophisticated collegiates at the University. Not so well defined, but still sensed is a growing distrust of the powers of nats to combat modern evils.

The nats can best be visualized as supernatural despots each with his province (the home, village, sea, babies) and each exacting tribute of periodic or constant attention in the form of flowers or food, red and white cloth strips, and an altar which may have the image of the nat carved in wood (or moulded in modern plasticene). Banyan trees with their multiple, snake-like trunks, are the most common places of abode. When disaster in the form of sickness or other ill fortune strikes, the nats are appeased with offerings immediately. The SAY SAYA will frequently check with the family of his patient to make sure this has been done. In Rangoon and elsewhere, business men whose fortunes have been good are the main supporters of the nat festivals which are given for the entertainment of all the nats once a year in October, for a seven day period. NAT KADAW (nat-wives) are the mediums who contact the nats by becoming possessed by them at this festival and other special occasions (for a single nat) throughout the year. These are married women or more rarely homosexuals who dance, answer questions and give opinions when possessed.

Punishment for offense against the nats is first shown by accidents or sudden illnesses like paralysis meted out to the offender. If the offender continues the village as a whole will gradually be afflicted. For example, when a drunkard offends the nats with blasphemous language evil falls on the entire village. Villagers led by the elders and a prominent NAT-KADAW go in a body to the major banyan tree shrine to have an understanding with the offended nats. Offerings are given and attention of the nats called to the woes of

776 753 688 672 782 [463] of the villagers. The head-nat, the guardian of the village, replies with accusations that "the whole village has forgotten me", boasts of his powers to punish and is finally molified. In Rangoon there are professional nat-givers who parade the streets with a cart bearing the image of "the conquerer of the salty waters" (special nat of entrepreneurs). For a few annas he will make offerings to the nat and relcive the busy townspeople of this task.

776 782 The arrangement is a mutual one where the people enjoy freedom from oppressions in return for certain concessions. This phenomenon closely parallels the traditional relationship between the rulers and the ruled in Burma. In a real sense the nat concept serves the function of alloying the Burmese a sense of control over catastrophic forces which do not fall into any other system (as secular, political, [177] personal relationships, cosmology.). It is this system of controls that the western scientific system most immediately competes with. The administrative and entrepreneur class of Burmese especially in Rangoon say they "Do not believe" in nats. But it is usual for most individuals no matter what their western background to apply to nats in cases of ill fortune "just in case".

775 THAYEH (Ghosts) generally are a group of supernatural spirits closely related to nats in their origins but with a different set of properties. These are "recently" deceased individuals whose crimes and sins while on earth or manner of death condemn them to an eternity of wandering and mischief-making. Actually, each person becomes a ghost at death but is ordinarily released from earth at the moment of the interment of the copse for judgement in heaven. Those who die of [761] "raw death" become ghosts. These include: death in childbirth, by wild animals (especially tigers), instant deaths by dahs as in warfare, or by hanging. In Maung Maung Than's village a prominent ghost is U Me Gyi (Mr. Blacky) a very sinful fellow who lived 50 or 60 years ago in the village. His complexion is quite black and horribly distorted. He inhabits a banyan tree and specialises in causing infant illness. Offerings of rice at the tree pacifies him. Ghosts are forces for evil only - evil of the more irritating and less important kind.

751 Older people wear red and white coloured strings about their necks as a protection against ghost evils. It is very common to wear a LET-PWET

(arm-tie) charm consisting of a small metal tube bound about the upper arm or neck and containing an inscription written by a pongyi on silver or aluminum foil. Once a year, after new years (in March), a PAYA-YUDA (prayer-recite) ceremony is held. At this time pongyis recite the precepts of Buddha for the benefit of the ghosts - who "become hot and run away". Younger people, especially children, are susceptible to being possessed by ghosts. At this time they "throw fits" and are uncontrolable. Under the supervision of a pongyi the ghost is cast out by means of threats and beatings administered to the person of the possessed one. Beatings are severe and continuous often lasting an hour, until the ghost says he is "afraid" and departs. The possessed one, thus cured, does not later complain of rough treatment since this is borne by the invading ghost. Perhaps this relates to the less formulated, "nameless horrors" of unseen and unaccountable forces that cause otherwise unexplainable events - which concept pervades much of western thought to this day.

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A major difference between nats and ghosts is that ghosts cause only harm while nats are ordinarily beneficial in the manner described above. Ghosts may also be controlled for evil purposes against individuals in a variety of black magic. The specialists in black magic are PAH-YOH-GA-SAYA (influence-masters) of black magic or "lower root", (hell-evil), who administer the evil influence. Witches also have personal magic powers that allow them to cause harm to an individual by introducing foreign matter such as lumps of meat, hair balls, into the body of the victim. It is never known for sure who the witches are but old women of peculiar habits, and especially of the fishermen's group, are suspected. Such individuals are considered generally malivalent and special precautions are needed to avoid offending them. The influence masters, however, are well known and receive gift-fees for performing services either of causing or controlling black magic influences. Both groups, but especially the influence masters of the lower root control ghosts for their purposes.

- "upper root" (heaven) masters combat the "lower root evil"

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A major means of securing control of a ghost or "ghost-rearing" is to get the finger bone of a recently deceased person who died a "raw death". Incantations said over the bone insures the obedience of

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don't usually talk about these things with them. We invite the phongyis and worship them. We don't talk much with them. They preach the law and the 5 SILAS to us. 181 203

16. Q. Are there any persons of influence in camp who give advise on everyday living? 621

A. Yes, the person of influence is the schoolmaster, U Khant. But he only teaches the children and looks to the general cleanliness of the camp. Another person is the man who teaches the English. But they do not lay down what is right and what is wrong.

Activities of the Family in Relationship to the Supernatural.

The main forces which U Myaing and his family are concerned with 771 are those of the Nats and those of Buddhism. Speaking historically, the Nats seem to represent a remnant of an early form of animism in which the Nats were tree or nature spirits. It is interesting to note the manner in which U Myaing blends the two religious systems. The Nats control earthly happenings, and the Buddhist structure the eternal. We are concerned with identifying some of the major practices, but primarily with the differentiation between religious practices in [178] Pantanaw and in the refugee camp.

Nats.

The problem of the Nats came up in our study by the appearance of 776 ● a bamboo pole split so as to form a small basket at one end. This 782 object, called a KYAUNG ZAUNG rested on the roof of the camp hut next to U Myaing's. An interview in which Daw Aw Zar (.D.A.Z.) and U Myaing (U.M.) discussed Nats, is given in its entirety below because it reveals the rather vague feelings of "superstition" held of the Nats on the one hand and their potency on the other.

Q. No. 25 (photograph) is a split bamboo pole with a basket at the top. What is this called and what is it used for?

A. (D.A.Z.) KYAUNG ZAUNG. The thing he took from the roof and photographed? It is called a KYAUNG ZAUNG.
(U.M.) It is called KYAUNG ZAUNG.

Q. How do you use it ?

A. (D.A.Z.) We offer to U SHIN GYI and others. Offerings to Nats. Didn't you hear that big man speak? (To U Myaing).

Q. Who made this object? Who makes them?

A. (D.A.Z.) The people who give the offerings of course.

Q. Do you have to make these when you give offerings?

A. If we give offerings we make them.

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Q. Don't you buy them?

A. We don't have to buy the bamboo and we know how to make it ourselves.

Q. (D.A.Z) Everyone around can come and make use of it when one has been made.

Q. Is there one for each household or for four or five households?

A. Whoever likes to give offerings comes and takes it and makes use of it.

63. Q. What offerings are put in these split bamboos?

A. (U.M. in aside) Include everything.
(D.A.Z.) You tell them. I don't know how to.

A. (U.M.) KAUKHYIN (Black rice) after it is prepared, coconuts, jaggery, Burmese tea leaves, betel quids.... these are offered to the nats.
(D.A.Z.) Fire sticks. Fire.
(U.M.) Fire is lighted and placed with the offerings.

Q. Are these candles or oil lamps?

A. It doesn't matter which. Either will do.

Q. Are the candles lit when they are put in the basket?

A. (U.M.) Yes, they are lit.

Q. How often are the offerings made?

A. It is not like this. We give offerings when we want to. If we feel like it we might give offerings today - or we may not do so for a whole year.

Q. Can you stay without doing so?
A. We can stay.

Q. It is not compulsory?
A. (U.M.) NO. It is not. You give offerings with a purpose - to ward off danger.

64. Q. Are the offerings given in hard times - in order to get better?

A. (U.M.) It is not like this either.
(D.A.Z.) It is because of worship. When someone is slightly unwell or indisposed offerings are made.

Q. And do they then get better?

A. (D.A.Z.) Yes. So it is said. People say that they regain health.
(U.M.) They are only practicing what the elders of the past have prescribed. You can stay without giving any offering.

65. Q. Do the Nats have names? If so what are some of the names?

A. (D.A.Z.) U SHIN GYI.

Q. Are there others besides U SHIN GYI?

A. (U.M.) There are 37 nats.

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Q. This is only for U SHIN GYI? (the bamboo basket)
A. Yes. A separate offering for U SHIN GYI.
Q. You don't offer to the 37 Nats?
A. (U.M.) No, we don't.

66. Q. Is this one Nat just for fishermen or is it just one of Nats?
A. (D.A.Z.) There is no connection with fishing.
Q. (U.M.) No connection.
(D.A.Z) The whole Burmese race worships him.

67. Q. Ask U Myaing or his mother to tell me a little bit of the Nats - some of the names of the Nats, what they are like, and so forth, and why he offers only to one Nat.
A. (U.M.) We can't. Since the eldest of the past did it, we follow them in this practice. We don't know much.
Q. Why is it that you give offerings to U SHIN GYI and not to the others?
A. We are not concerned with the other Nats, and that is why we don't give offerings to them.
Q. And are you concerned with U SHIN GYI?
A. U SHIN GYI also does not concern us. But since many.....
Q. Is it that the elders in the past did not give offerings to the other Nats?
A. (D.A.Z.) Those who wanted to give offerings did so.
(U.M.) There were all kinds. People who gave offerings did so. We give only to U SHIN GYI, we also do it.
Q. Other people of the past worshipped other Nats, didn't they?
A. (U.M.) Yes. But we do not know the source, neither have we asked about them. U SHIN GYI was shown at PWES in Z.F stories. A human being was called away alive by the Nats.
(D.A.Z.) In Rangoon haven't you seen dances for the other Nats?
Q. Please tell us something more about the Nats.
A. (U.M. & D.A.Z.) We can't tell much about U SHIN GYI either we know only how to give offerings.
Q. Tell us all you know about U SHIN GYI.
A. (D.A.Z.) We give offerings. We prepare KAUKHNYIN and offer it. It keeps away danger.
Q. We are not asking about the offering but about U SHIN GYI.
A. We don't know about U SHIN GYI.
Q. How does U SHIN GYI look like? Have you ever seen him?
A. (U.M.) No, I have never seen him.

68. Q. Does U Myaing believe that the Nats control things on earth or are there some spirits with Buddhism that control things. Let me restate that question. The merit that U Myaing gets is for the future life. Is that correct?
A. (U.M. & D.A.Z.) It is for the future life of course.
Q. (D.A.Z.) Merit is for the future life.
(U.M.) The merit accumulated now cannot be seen..... meritorious acts are done so that in the next existence..
(D.A.Z.) so that we might have a long life like mine... we fast and pray. It is like this: I have lived to this age because in the past existence I prayed at pagodas, observed the 5 precepts and the 8 precepts.

69. Q. The Nats are apparently not very important then, and it is the merit that is gained in former existences that takes care of the present life?
A. (U.M.) Not important. The good in this life is because of the meritorious acts in the previous existence.
Q. And the Nats are not important in this life?
A. (D.A.Z.) No.
(U.M.) The Nats only give bad results. It is because they may work evil that offerings are made to them. We can't see them either.

70. (D.A.Z.) They don't bring any good. You can only get food if you have done good in the previous existence, in which case you will be wealthy and live long. 776● 782

70. Q. What kind of misfortune do the Nats bring; he mentioned sickness - what are some of the others?

A. According to what many people say, they can cause ill health and even death - that's what they say.

Q. Do they mean to say that people are killed by the Nats?

A. (D.A.Z. & U.M.) Yes. We say that such a person has died because the Nats have caught him. That's what we mean when we say that the Nats work evil.
(U.M.) To die of drowning - that is because the Nats have been wronged; that is what most people say.
(D.A.Z.) We don't know these things very well.

71. Q. What about when the fishing is not good - the fish do not come upstream. Do the Nats have anything to do with that?

A. (U.M.) Many people say so - that the fish are said to be "lifted" or kept upstream by the Nats. We see nothing, but many people say that it is so. Acting on such talk we have to go to the Nats at the INS and give offerings of liquor, fowl curry and duck curry. According to IN custom we have to do it that way; we have to hang coconuts (on the offering place) and this is to appease the Nats who are holding up the fish, so that the fish might come downstream. When this happens, people become confirmed in their belief; when the fish don't come downstream they say, "Oh these are all lies about the Nats." They speak in this fashion.

The following information, which duplicates in part that given above, was secured at a later time.

"We give offerings only to U SHIN GYI and we do so twice a year, in the months of Waso and Thadingyut. These offerings are to keep us from harm. We do not worship other Nats because we have no family tradition of having done so. Of course, we do not have a family tradition of worshipping U SHIN GYI either, but then the whole Burmese nation worships him.

"In IN work we also give offerings to an Indian Nat who is known as KWIN BAING of Nat-Mauk IN. We give him offerings of roast chicken and liquor, black rice or KAUKHNYIN, bunches of bananas, coconuts, money, Htameins and GAUNG BAUNGS. These offerings are made only at IN time. No one bothers at other times.

"Some people even get possessed by the Nats, and then they say things like: 'The fish do not come downstream to the INS because I am preventing them. I am doing this because you do not worship me, etc.' When the people hasten to propitiate the Nat, the fish either come down to the IN or they do not. If through a coincidence the fish do come down, people come to believe in the Nat. I do not believe in them much. What I do, I do because those in the past have always done so.

"They have no U SHIN GYI ceremonies here comparable to those we had in Pantanaw. Here they give offerings to them only in their own homes. In Pathwe, the whole village got together for the ceremony. In the month of Pyatho when the river begins to subside we start to take collections in the village. We collect only on our side of Pathwe village, which is built on the three banks at a confluence of two streams. Our side of the village contains about 250 houses, and each house- 776 796

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796 hold contributes as much as it wants to from one anna to eight annas. If more money is needed, people who have money contribute more. These offerings are given so as to keep danger away. It is not for merit. We don't know about that. One thing is certain; epicemics like plague and cholera never visited our village, and we have not had a single case of daccity in our village in my whole lifetime.

"The headman makes the necessary arrangements, buys the black rice, coconuts, jaggery, Burmese tea leaves, candles, bananas, and places them on the special place prepared for them.

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796 "We have not seen any person here in Rangoon being possessed by spirits, but we did have acquaintances in Pantanaw who were possessed, he loses consciousness of himself as a human being. He begins to tremble, and the Nat begins to speak through his mouth. I don't believe in the other Nats, but I do believe in U SHIN GYI because of the testimony of my own eyes. In the districts we place offerings to U SHIN GYI on a small bamboo framework made of four little bamboos each with a diameter about the size of your fountain pen. This framework is held together with pith of the mat fibre plant (HNEE). Sometimes sceptical people take a hand when the framework is being put up, and tie the HNEE very lightly, so as to break very easily. As a result the TAUNG high framework is so flimsy that it would collapse even if a bird were to jump on it. But the strange thing is that when a person becomes possessed and leaps onto the altar and dances about - nothing happens. In this condition, a person may perform on the harp (SAUNG) even though in his ordinary waking life he does not know how to play it. He also dances on glass tumblers. This took place before the whole of our family, together with about a hundred other spectators. Ko Ba THin's son, Htun Ngwe, who is of the same build as myself, leaped onto the bamboo framework and began eating the food laid out on it. On that occasion we had
[562] been expecting Ma Kyin Yone to be possessed, but she did not appear because her husband would not allow her to come. We had invited her to come because she had been possessed before. In our village these two were the only people who were possessed. The man was possessed once, and the woman about six times. On these occasions the whole village turns out to watch.

"The altar is built on the evening previous to the ceremony. It is made of two levels, and is about 4 TAUNG square and one TAUNG high, and is used to hold 37 plates, each holding plantains, black rice, coconuts, jaggery, LAPHET (Burmese pickled tea), etc. The elder in charge then prays to the 37 Nats including U SHIN GYI for help. This ceremony has nothing to do with the phongyis, and the village phongyi is not invited. The two spheres are entirely different. The phongyi does not worship the nats. The systems of belief are entirely different. We worship both. The spirit does not appear at every ceremony - only when there is someone to possess. We had relied on Khin Yone but she did not appear and Htun Ngwe was possessed instead.

"When the nat spoke through Htun Ngwe we asked him about himself and his past life, but he refused to say anything, saying that it made him sad to think back on it.(the possessing nat's past). When the person recovered and we questioned him, he could not remember anything of all that had occured while he was in the trance. In the whole district there are only four or five people who have been ever possessed, and so the majority of people in the district have not witnessed a single case of possession of Nats.

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796 "U SHIN GYI avoids eating flesh, does not drink liquor, and even when eating betel does not put tabacco (ASE) in his mouth. Out of all the food that is offered to him, the nat partakes only of a little of the black rice, the remainder being shared by the members of the village. Enough food is prepared to feed the whole village, and a crier is sent through the village to announce a general invitation to everyone. When food has been

set aside for the 37 plates, the people are served. 776●
"The Nat ceremony at the Nat-kauk IN is for KAIN 796
BAING, the Indian Nat. He is given offerings of chicken, liquor, Htamsins, etc. This Nat lives in a tree and he has made this known by possessing someone and speaking through him. After the food is offered to this Nat, the people who gave the offering eat it all up, drink all the liquor and present the Htamsins to the aged and elderly. The gold leaf is stuck onto the trunk of the Nat tree, and the black rice is thrown away.

"The person who works his IN for himself alone has to provide for his own offerings. If the IN undertaking is a cooperative one the various members get together to give offerings to the IN nat."

In holding a ceremony for U SHIN GYI there are some items offered which are only just sufficient for his consumption, and for a few other people. Some items of food, however, are prepared in sufficient quantity to feed the whole village.

The items used in the yearly offering to the IN nat KAIN BAING include:- One chicken, one bottle of liquor, jaggery, Rs. 2/8 worth of KAUKHNYIN or black rice and about four condensed milk tins of rice. No Htamsins. The nat who likes Htamsins is the HSE-DAW-SHIN nat to whom King Anawratha himself is believed to have given offerings.

Items used in a single ceremony for U Shin Gyi include:- Three [173]
condensed milk tins of black rice or KAUKHNYIN @ Rs. 8/-, ten coconuts @ Re. 1/- each, 50 ticals of LAPHET or Burmese pickled tea @ Rs. 6/- per viss (100 ticals), about 4 or 6 annas worth of betel quid, about three viss of jaggery, costing Rs. 5/-, 8 packets of 10 candles @ 2 annas per packet and flowers just sufficient to place on the altar. Rs. 2/- worth of flowers are bought @ one anna per bundle. The flowers are mainly SEIN CHE (diamond decorated). Some flowers need not be purchased, but can be easily gathered from the trees. THA HYAY (pleasant country) flowers and coconut kernels are also placed on the altar. These kernels are obtained free of charge from the coconut trees.

Buddhism

The practices of Buddhism are both a religious duty and a social occasion for the family. The difficulty of separating the everyday 779
"secular" activities from the supernatural will be especially apparent in the passages below.

782 the well being of his family, for riches and the absence of privation and penury. He desires Nirvana. He prays that all the creatures inhabiting the 36 worlds may be infused with love for each other. [775] "Even if I change existence, may I be born into a better existence. It would not be a better existence if I were to become a cat or some other animal."

782 •776 Daw Aw Zar prays that she may meet with good people and not meet up with enemies; that she may be enabled to meet the high-minded and avoid wicked people. Ma Aye Myaing's prayers are about the same as Daw Aw Zar, but she adds that she may be able to give charities liberally in this and successive existences.

In Pantanaw U Myaing prayed for the same things that he prays for now in camp. There he took life and had to expiate the demerit acquired from taking the lives of fish, with the merit accumulated through charities and other meritorious acts. He took some consolation in the fact that he did not take part personally in the killing itself but only gave directions, and even when, in those years in which he had to buy live fish from the IN workers, the fish poured into his boat died of their own accord and so no blame could be attached to him. He did not beat them to death. He believes that although fishermen have a bad reputation as people who take lives, that does not mean that the one necessarily implies the other. However, he concedes that he may be blamed for directing the killing to take place. He was not sure, and so he goes ahead with his charities.

Observations of Aspects of Life in Rangoon.

369 771 In Pathee they had pigs killed occasionally for pork but it did not greatly disturb him. The mass slaughter of pigs in Rangoon spalled him as being a very gruesome affair. Fifty to sixty animals were lined up in the slaughter house on the occasion he witnessed such a killing. The slaughterers were Chinese and they took the squealing pigs, despatched them and handed them over to others who dip them in boiling water to clean off the hair, and this happened even if the pigs were not quite dead as yet. U Myaing thinks they must be getting a lot of demerit.

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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However, the Burmese equivalent of the English interlude came into being all the same. It developed out of the equivalent of the English miracle play, but indirectly. The chance of developing the drama was seized by professional actors. To break away from the tradition and the conservatism, persons outside the pale of 'good' society were needed. Spirit dancers were such persons. They worshipped the *nats*[1] and most people looked upon them with fear as being in touch with sinister and unnatural forces. They were outside the religion, and their drunken dances—drunken from wine and ecstacy—were outside the popular conception of moral behaviour. Therefore the new professional actors were drawn from the ranks of the spirit mediums. However, those who took to the new profession were malcontents and failures in their original profession. The increase in the number of the spirit dancers had caused the mediums to form themselves into a fraternity, the entry to which was closely guarded. The economic attractions of spirit dancing tempted people who had no faith in the spirits to become mediums. These factors caused discontent and disunion among the mediums, and within and without the fraternity pseudo-mediums came into being. The advance of education had robbed the *nats* of many worshippers, but most people continued to patronize spirit dancing for mere love of music and dancing. The result was the rise of a class of professional entertainers who danced and sang and played on musical instruments. The new dancers pretended to be mediums and semi-mediums, but their dancing was unconnected with any spirit feast. The rise of this professional dancing was doubtless gradual and must have preceded the *Nibhatkhin*. As early as about the year 1400, two princes and their attendants, when turned out of their palace, earned their living as wandering minstrels and professional dancers, pretending to be spirit worshippers.[2] Because of the very fact that the new dancers were malcontents and failures in their original

[1] The objects of the spirit worship are the thirty-seven *nats*, all of whom are more or less of evil character; but there are in addition to these many good *nats* who have little to do with human affairs. [776]

[2] One prince became King Minkaung (1401–22), the other, his brother, helping him to gain the throne. An attendant became King Mohnyinthadot (1427–40), and the others ministers (G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 96). [175]

The new dancers were mostly men. Men mediums were secondary to women mediums, and perhaps that was one of the reasons for the discontent among the mediums, and also the reason why the men took to wandering all over the country as dancers. [462]

Zlz Htin Aung · B-6 (ca. 1960) 1957 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

178 witnessed Burmese plays.[1] Ridgeway approves of that theory. He
536 maintains that the tree is symbolic of the worship of the *nats*. In an
114 appendix to the book he quotes a letter from a resident in Burma (which arrived too late to be discussed in the book itself), describing some sort of a *nat* ritual where a spirit was supposed to be dwelling in a
[TK] tree. However, *nats* are supposed to dwell, not only in trees, but also
[TK] in houses, mountains, streams, lakes, on Mount Mayyu, in fact everywhere, and it is extremely unlikely that the tree should have been chosen specially to represent the abode of the *nat*. In all the ritual connected with the worship of the thirty-seven *nats*, the use of a tree does not occur except in the case of the *nat*, U-Yin-Gyi. When offerings are made to him, a wooden representation of a forked branch of a tree is used. But that symbol is used only when that particular spirit alone is being worshipped, i.e. when all the *nats* are being worshipped *en bloc* the symbol is not used. U-Yin-Gyi has no special connexion with the stage, and he is essentially connected with Lower Burma; and Upper Burma, not Lower, was the home of Burmese drama. And what Colonel Yule took to be a vague answer was the true answer. What he saw was an interlude and not a developed play, and, as has been stated, the scene of the interlude was almost always the forest, for it needed nothing except a tree to indicate the scene. Therefore, the tree which the ambassador saw was a piece of stage scenery and nothing more.

536* Though Ridgeway's theory that the drama had its origins in the
795 worship of the *nats*, therefore, is not founded on fact, his contention that the Burmese professional actors are the lineal descendants of the mediums who impersonated the spirits of the dead is not wrong. But the fact that the actors are the descendants of such persons should not mislead us into thinking the drama to be a descendant of spirit worship. There is a great danger of being thus misled if one knows the various stage conventions without knowing the real history of the drama. And had Ridgeway been acquainted with these conventions, which (strangely enough) were not known to him and his informants, he might have been strengthened in his view. The most important of the stage conventions is the *nat* chorus which often acts as a 'curtain-raiser' to the actual play. The chorus composed of females comes out and sings and dances to various *nat*

[1] H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855*.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

644 on such occa-
[643] sions the king appeared in the royal insignia, which otherwise only figure as emblems of state. The insignia in the illustration are surmounted by a queen's crown (*sibòn*). The shape of a king's crown is seen in Nos. 151 and 425. There [346] being but a single palace and thousands of *kyaungs* and temples, the palace [344] appears to resemble a *kyaung*. But the converse is the fact; the *kyaung* it is which in virtue of its religious character shares the distinction of the palace. The most recent style adopted by the Burman sovereigns was *Shin-Bayin*—Lord of Lords. A chief title was *Sinbyù Shin*—Lord of the White Elephant. Every subject prostrated himself in the presence of the king, with face averted from the effulgence of the royal countenance. An official called *thandawzin* used to repeat aloud the words uttered by the king. The ensign betokening the presence of the king and of the chief queen (*mlbayà*) is the *tlbyù* (p. 101). [776] Two to eight were borne according to the solemnity of the [532] occasion. The chief queens were frequently half-sisters [588] of the kings. For all the royal acts, the lying, rising, eating, speaking, there are euphemisms proper to the occasion; one of the most current of these is *shwepawdaw*—the golden foot. At his demise the sovereign is said to migrate to the abode of *nats* or delectable land; the staff of his *tlbyù* was broken. The paraphernalia of the king's service were elaborate; but in his attitude to the *yahán* he comported himself as an ordinary man. The Royal White Elephant was maintained in great pomp; it ate and drank out of golden vessels and had a retinue for its service. An elephant really white—probably an albino—was captured in 1805, but was pampered so that it died. A second was captured in 1806 which lived for fifty years. Other "white elephants" kept for state have enjoyed their reputation in virtue of possessing certain assumed criteria of the "white" variety, as to the number of the toes, direction of the tail-tuft and other distinctions, without regard to the colour of the skin.

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384. CARVED FIGURE OF NAT.

644 Change of capital at the accession of a new sovereign was characteristic of
633 Burman empire, even when there was no change of dynasty or other political convulsion. Events of the latter kind were no doubt the original reasons of such changes. Next to Pagán, Sagáing, on the right bank of the Irawadi, facing the flat and now desolate site of Ava, is the most impressive of the

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

206. TEMPLES RAISED BY A MODERN KING (THE KUTHODAW p. 122).

historic centres of Burman dominion. Sagáing was abandoned for the last time in 1776 for a new capital at Amayapôya (*Amarapúra* — Abode of Immortals) half-way between Ava (*Inwa*) and the modern capital Mandálé, which was founded in 1857, after the accession of King Mindôn Min. The most ancient capital is Tagáung, one hundred miles north of Mandalé. Other capitals were Shwebô, Myinzaing, Pannya. The capitals of the Taláing dominion were Thatôn, Pegu, and Prome (*Pye*). Rangoon (*Yangôn*), at the meeting point of five navigable channels, and with anchorage for the largest ships, has out-distanced all competitors since the modern development of commerce.

For the history of Burma the only available source is the official chronicle kept by command of the kings—*maha-yazawin*. The first part is occupied with the legendary origin of the race from the cloud-dwellers—*Byamma* (the Burman form of *Brahma*).* The names and doings of legendary persons follow, and lines of legendary kings. The earliest historical facts which emerge are the founding of Tagáung, and incidents relating to the Buddha and the councils of his church in India. It is believed by Phayre that the *Savanna Bhumi* of ancient Indian books refers to Thatôn, and that under *Chrysê Chersonesus* Ptolemy refers to the Eastern Peninsula of Asia. We do not reach a connected history till the founding of Pagán about 100 A.D. From that epoch onwards the history of the peninsula, until the Burman Empire was consolidated and the dynasty of

208. FIGURES OF BYAMMA (EMBROIDERY).

* The name is also written *Myamma*, but commonly pronounced *Bama*, of which "Burma(h)" and "Birma" are corruptions.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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418. SUNLAUNG AT THADINDYUT FESTIVAL.

and, in order to possess its proper value, should be completed in a day and a night. This is the only approach to a vigil. The texture is loose, and broad bands of tinsel are shot through to make up the woof faster.

Tawthalin is a minor festival, falling in Lent, and observed only in Pegu. The *Tawthalin* offerings are distinguished by being in thousands, one thousand little cakes, one thousand plantains, and so on (No. 282). The number one thousand is said to be symbolical

[801] of the thousand *gâta* or stanzas of the *Wéthandayâ zat*, the legend of Gawdama Buddha's last incarnation but one, closely prefiguring the final incarnation.

782 The above are the Buddhist festivals, which are celebrated by the whole population together, with all the *éclat* they can give them. The only other

776 recurring observances of a religious character have nothing to do with Buddhism, and are rejected by all earnest and enlightened Buddhists. These observances, if not furtively conducted, as is often the case, are kept by individuals only, or by households at a time; they have sufficient in common with the *nat* worship of the hill tribes, to show what the original Burman and Talâing worship may have been. Unlike the Karén, who knows only

776 of evil *nats*, the Burman has both good and evil spirits. The former belong

772 to the land of the *zat* ro-

775 mance, the latter are chiefly the survival of the primitive paganism. In the Burman cosmogony, *nat-yua* is the delectable land to which, by a courtesy analogous to the German "*hoch-*" and "*höchst-*

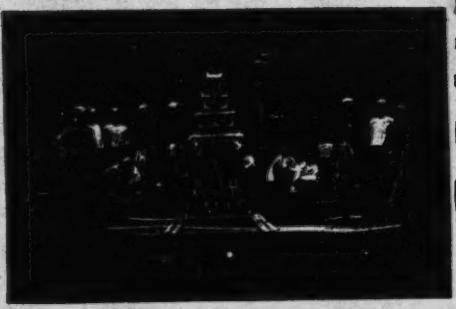
[643] *selig*," the kings are said to migrate at their demise.

[524] A higher order than *nat* is *thadyâ* and *thadyâ-min*, and above these the highest order of being, *byamma*, the cloud-

419. FIRE-BALLOONS AT THADINDYUT.

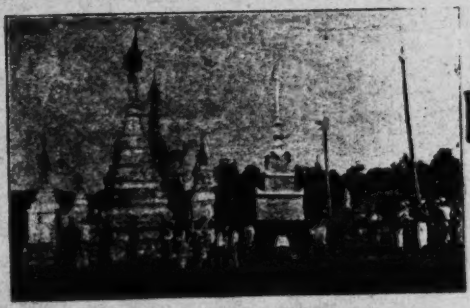
25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

dwellers to whom the Burmans pretend to owe their origin. These ethereal beings are subject to the law of *karma*, and re-birth. They have to attain *nirvâna* like men, through virtue. Under "gods" in the Pali scriptures are to be understood such beings as these. Together with men they form the group *thaddawâ* — rational beings—to whom the message of the Buddha is delivered. (See Stevenson, *Lexicon*, pp. 603, 788.) The higher orders of existence are not to be confounded with the higher religious states, *ayahât*, *ayâttapô*, which are attained by the "noble path" alone (p. 46). In this fairyland, situated in the *Himawûnta taw* (Himalayas) and its clouds, the poetry of the people centres. (See *The Soul of a People*, Chapter XXI.) As the heavens are indwelt by ethereal beings, so also everything on earth has its presiding genius. The heavenly *genii* are beneficent, the terrestrial ones friendly or malign. The *nats* of the mountains inspire awe, and their protection is invoked against wild beasts and dangers to wayfarers. A *nat* is pro-



420. RIVER ILLUMINATIONS AT THADINDYUT.

421. MAZES AT THADINDYUT.



422. TAZAUNGMON FESTIVAL.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

A nat is propitiated by offerings at a shrine, almost always in miniature. Only fruit, flowers, and music are offered by Buddhists. A special genius is assigned to the dwelling—*ein-dwin Min Magayi nat*, in whose little shrine a cocoanut is offered. The nut is replaced as the water dries up, which it is assumed the *nat* has drunk. There are *nats* who preside over countries, Û Mindyi and Û Mindyâ for Burma, Û Yindyi for Pegu, Bôdaw and his sons for Thatôn, and other local *nats*. These *nats* are propitiated by such offerings as a crown, or by standing guard before their images, upon undertaking a journey, entering on a race or other contest. The five *nats* of the firmament have a special cult associated with that of the eight planets, with which the Buddha and eight *yahánda* are mixed up. The local *nats* are most commonly propitiated in *pyatho* (December), the harvest month. The visitations of malign spirits are attributed to what the Burmans call unripe (*asîin*) deaths. Such are deaths from lightning-stroke, accidents of all sorts, child-bed, cholera, and whatever is violent and sudden. The normal re-incarnation of the *karma* of such is immature; they haunt localities as ghosts (*tasi*), and seek the bodies of the living for hosts, thereby causing sickness. Slaughter in battle accounts for a plague of this kind, and the one plague entails another.

423. PROPITIATING THE LOCAL NATS (NÂKKAZA).

Pilgrimages to the great shrines are made in the dry months, especially at times of full moon. The most sacred shrine of the Peninsula and the perennial resort of pilgrims is the *zedi* on the site of the ancient Mun village Dagôn, renamed Yangôn (Rangoon). The legend declares that the original founders of the shrine deposited eight hairs

424. SHRINE OF THE HOUSE-GENIUS—MIN MAGAYI NAT.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

[DPP, P, 190]

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488. KYAITTYO PAYA. [To face p. 190.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

Animism in Burma is usually termed Nat-worship. *Nat* has been compared with the Indian, *Natha*, but it is probably an indigenous term.[5] Strictly speaking, it should be distinguished from "disembodied spirit" or ghost, for which the Burmese name is *tasè*. The Burmese also speak of the "butterfly" soul in man, the *leip-bya*, which may leave the body even in life, during dream or unconsciousness.[6] "A *nat* is something quite different. The word is the equivalent of our word god, in the sense in which we speak of the gods of ancient Greece and Rome."[7] *Nat* legends, however, express the belief that most, if not all, of these godlings were once human beings. Thus the familiar household Nat, Min Magayi, was once a blacksmith, Maung Tin Dè, a man of such prodigious strength that whenever he struck his anvil the whole city was shaken, to the great wrath of the king who caused the blacksmith's death. His spirit continued to vex the neighbourhood until a temple was built in his honour.[8] In later times such spirits seem to have been elevated to *Nat* status by royal degree. Burmese tradition emphasises *the* Thirty Seven *Nats*, but the number has no special significance. Many *Nats* not included in the thirty seven are recognised today and some of the thirty seven ignored. Any attempt to denote the *Nat* realm too narrowly misrepresents what is, in fact, a fluctuating and ill defined situation. 'All is change' applies to this realm, in Burmese estimation, as much as to any other. Nor can we point to any one origin of the cultus. The Mondaing *Nat*, for example, may reflect a primitive Nature worship, since Mondaing signifies whirlwind, but local legend suggests another origin.[9] Some of the *Nats* are associated with Brahmanic and Buddhist legend. Others are definitely local and even recent. Sir George Scott, who was an acute observer, said that the Burman always distinguished the Spirits of Nature from the legendary gods imported from India.[10] On the other hand, there is a tendency to mingle Buddhist story and Nat story, and the Buddhist *peta*, as well as the *deva* is quite at home among the Burmese *Nats*.[11]

In earlier times, a victim was slain in order to provide a guardian spirit for a new town or building, and as late as the eleventh century a queen is said to have given her life for such a purpose. Buddhist teaching against taking life has gradually prevailed, however, against these harsher

[5] Cf. Bigandet, *Life of Gaudama* Vol. I, p. 17, Vol. II, p. 324 and Temple, *The Thirty Seven Nats*, p. 8.
[6] Cf. Forbes, *British Burma*, chap. IV, p. 99.
[7] R. Grant Brown, *The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese*, p. 6.
[8] R. Grant Brown, *ibid.*, p. 13.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[10] Temple, *ibid.*, p. 3.
[11] Cf. Bimala C. Law, *The Buddhist Conception of Spirits*.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 AP1 Burma
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771 customs. Grant Brown observes that, while Buddhists in the Chindwin area still sacrifice fowls to the god of the harvest, 'the thing is done somewhat surreptitiously and shamefacedly.'[12]

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791 Other practices survive more openly. In many Burmese villages there is a *nat-ka-daw*, or spirit-medium, generally an elderly or middle-aged woman, who is supposed to be married to a *Nat*. She tells fortunes, and is called in sometimes in cases of sickness to discover whether the patient will recover. Mr. Spear describes an incident of this kind which took place in the main street of a large town in the presence of many spectators. "The *nat-ka-daw*, in addition to her usual clothing, wore a sash around the waist and a cloth wound around her head. She danced with a dah, a long and heavy Burmese knife, in her hand, until she fell exhausted." Plantains and coconuts had been placed in a shelter, opposite the house, as offerings to the *Nat*.[13]

[782] In this case, apparently, the *Nat* was neither held responsible for the sickness nor expected to cure it. There are times of epidemic sickness, however, when a whole village is temporarily abandoned, and special rituals are followed to placate the *Nat*, who is considered to have caused the epidemic.

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782 In an interesting account of the development of a modern *Nat* cultus, a Burmese writer describes a public festival in honour of the *Nat*. A play is staged during which one of the Thirty Seven *Nats*, who is personified by a villager, asks the *Nat* of the locality if he is taking due care of the villagers. Here the *Nat* is obviously regarded as benevolent. But we are told that this was not always so. Formerly the Nat was cruel, unreasonable, mischievous and demoniac. But "he is now believed to have taken to religion, to keep the sabbath and to lead the life of a saintly god." In

[674] spite of his own sanctity, however, he seems to favour evil-doers. "No organised theft is ever committed in Lower Burma ... without invoking his aid." The would-be criminals cook a meal within a circle they have marked on the ground. If any of the rules of the succeeding ritual are

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[792] broken, the proposed robbery is abandoned. Some Buddhist monks of this region, more orthodox than others, have tried to suppress the Nat cultus, but in vain.[14]

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776 Such beliefs and practices are obviously bound to affect thought and conduct. The Burmese feel around them a vast, invisible *Nat* world, which is both near and remote. There are spirits in the trees, the rivers,

[12] *The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese*, p. 9.

[13] R. F. Spear, unpublished MS, *The Syncretism of Animism and Buddhism in Burma* (1928) chap. 1, p. 14.

[14] U Tha Khin, "Is U Yin Gyi a National God of the Burmans?" *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XIV, part II (1924).

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the lakes, the mountains and there are distant *Nat* realms ruled by *Nat* chieftains. All of these spirits are capricious. They encourage the view that life is a gamble. A man must bargain and wile his way through as best he can, hemmed in by a vague, immeasureable threat of evil. A religion, therefore, which points the way through the maze, indicates some order in the realm of caprice and promises deliverance from evil, may be the more welcome. On the other hand, it contains a challenge to caprice in oneself.

2. *Animism and Buddhism interwoven*

There is no question, therefore, of the survival of Animism in Burma, nor of its influence. The only question which arises is the *extent* of this influence. Is it so persistent and powerful that Buddhism is no more than a surface polish?

At first sight, this indeed may seem to be the case, for not only is Animism a parallel cultus, sometimes furtive but frequently brazen; it also seems to be interwoven in the very texture of popular Buddhist expression and practice. As a boy, the Burman learns how Nats watched over the infant Buddha, how the Buddha, by his virtue, defeated the jealous Manh *Nat*, how the rest of the *Nat* world acclaimed the victory with shouts of exultation. *Nats* appear in all the subsequent events of the Buddha's history.[15] On pagoda platforms the boy may see scenes depicting the *Nats*. Early in his education, he may learn a poem celebrating the Buddha's victory. On the most memorable day of his life as a Buddhist, the day of his *shin-byu* or confirmation, he may *shikoh* to the *Nat* shrine. At his death, a monk may be called to his side, not to give him spiritual consolation but 'because the good influence of the monk's pious presence keeps away evil spirits.'[16]

Consequently, Burmese Buddhists have been criticised for their inconsistency. How, it is asked, can a belief that a human 'spirit' has been transported to the *Nat* realm be reconciled with the Buddhist denial of the soul? If Buddhism denies the Divine, and even Buddha himself is not worshipped, how can it be right to worship and propitiate these *Nat* godlings? How can it be legitimate to expect their assistance, if man is the arbiter of his own destiny, subject to moral law alone, as Buddhism affirms? And Buddhism teaches: Thou shalt not kill. What, then, of fowls and oxen and even humans sacrificed to propitiate *Nats*? Toleration is

[15] Cf. Bigandet, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 37; cf. Temple, *Thirty Seven Nats*, p. 6.
[16] Cf. Purser and Saunders, *M.B.B.*, pp. 38, 97; Sir George Scott, *The Burmese: His Life and Notions*, Vol. I, chap. XXII, p. 299.

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doubtless a virtue enjoined by Buddhism. Carried to this extreme, however, has it not distorted Buddhism beyond recognition?

The Buddhist reply is two-fold. In the first place, it is claimed that there are *Nat* beliefs and practices which are *not* inconsistent with Buddhism. Since the normal Buddhist foresees many possible rebirths before he attains Nibbāna, there is no reason why some of these rebirths should not occur in a *Nat* realm. As to the denial of the soul, that raises difficulties, but are they so very different from the questions raised by the *Jātaka* stories in Buddhist tradition itself? The learned Buddhist has his own explanations, and the villager is inclined to regard life itself as ultimately as great a mystery as Nibbāna, while he does lip service to the *an-attā* doctrine (soul-denial). 'The Buddha accepted the Indian universe of his day ready-made' with its conception of heavens and hells and innumerable worlds.[17] Popular Buddhism, as popular religion everywhere, lives in narrative form, and the ordinary Burman dwells in two worlds of story, Buddhist and *Nat*, which fuse together.

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As to *Nat* practices, some of these are innocent, and others have been given a Buddhist ethical content. Gratitude, for example, is both natural and good in itself. What harm, then, if a villager presents flowers at a *Nat* shrine from such a motive?[18] As to propititiation, even in this present life, men deem it wise to placate powerful humans. Buddhism, therefore, can wisely and tolerantly assimilate many *Nat* conceptions and practices without inconsistency. So it is argued.

Other ideas and customs, however, are admittedly incompatible with true Buddhism. These, it is claimed, have either been opposed or they have been tolerated for a time in confidence that sound religion would eventually prevail. Asked why he allowed *Nat* images in a Buddhist shrine, King A-naw-ra-hta is said to have replied, "Men will not come for the sake of the new faith. Let them come for their old gods and gradually they will be won over."[19] This confidence, it is held, has been justified: Buddhism has at least prevailed sufficiently to take the sting out of Animism; human sacrifice is no longer tolerated, and even animal sacrifices are furtive.

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Is there then no surviving superstitious fear of the *Nats*? This is debated. Temple quotes a formidable Oath, administered in the courts of law, which invokes the *Nats:*

"I will speak the truth.... May the Nats who guard the sacred heavens ... the keepers and warders of countless shrines ... the Nats

[17] J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, chap. v, p. 76.

[18] Moung Po Me, "Animism or Agnosticism?" *Buddhism*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1903, Rangoon), p. 95.

[19] [illegible], *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma*, chap. VII, p. 242.

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who watch and ward the mighty rivers ... may the nāga and the galōn, hideous dragons and cruel birds, all ogres and demons ... may all these spirits and ill things unite to slay me and mine to the utmost limits of kinship, if I speak not the truth...."[20] 695 771 776

Respectable persons have trembled at the prospect of taking this oath, says Temple, so great was their dread of the *Nats*. A British magistrate, however, writing at a later day, observed drily that the fearsome Oath did not prevent false witness.[21] Perhaps these later witnesses did not know its terms, since the Oath was not read out in his court, only handled. Perhaps, however, they did not fear the *Nats* as much as their sires did. We may indeed question whether men who can talk of the Nats reforming their ways and turning to religion can hold them in any lively dread. Smeaton, in his *Loyal Karens of Burma*, refers to some Christian converts who still propitiated the *Nats*. "We must throw some sops to the foul demons who afflict us," they explained, "but our hearts are ever looking for God." Their Buddhist neighbours might offer a similar explanation. They may still deem it prudent to throw some sops to the *Nats*, while their hearts are towards the Buddha. We may term such an attitude superstitious, remembering that similar superstitious practices survive on similar grounds in other religious traditions. But we may well hesitate before we describe the Burmese as *Nat*-worshippers or say that their Buddhism is only a veneer. 771 779* 776

The Burman may claim that, while certain aspects of Animism can be tolerated without inconsistency, Buddhism has, in fact, opposed the more objectionable practices, has prevailed against them, and has altered the attitude to the *Nats*. This, in substance, is the reply contained in an article criticising the statement in the Census Report shortly after its publication. The *Nats*, says the writer, Moung Po Me, 'are real beings to the Burman and Buddhism does not deny their existence.' But they are certainly not bogeys. It is only when the Burman deviates from Buddhist ethics that Buddhism becomes a venee .[22]

His verdict is confirmed by other observers who may be considered more impartial. "The nats were the gods of Burma before the Buddha arrived," says Professor Pratt. "But as soon as he came they learned their place as merely subordinate spirits, and they have kept their place very well ever since."[23] "Were spirit worship twice as prominent as it is," observes a Christian missionary, "I should still call Buddhism the religion

[20] Temple, *The Thirty Seven Nats*, p. 4; cf. Scott, *The Burman*, Vol. II, chap. XXVI, p. 250.

[21] C. J. Richards, *The Burman*, p. 50.

[22] Article in *Buddhism*, cited supra.

[23] *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, chap. VII, p. 127.

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of the Burman."[24] The most adequate inquiry on the subject to-date is the unpublished thesis by Mr. Spear which I have been privileged to quote. "It must be said," concludes Mr. Spear, "that Buddhism in Burma has kept itself remarkably free from the practice of taking ideas and customs associated with primitive religion in general and Nat worship in particular, and making them its own.... It is Buddhism which is the real religion of the people. It is what they practise in their best moments; it is what they want their children taught.... To be a Burman is to be a Buddhist."[25]

We arrive, then, at the opposite conclusion to that stated by Mr. Lowis. in his Census Report. Instead of saying that 'the Burman has added to his animism just so much Buddhism as suits him,' it is nearer the truth to say that he has added to his Buddhism just so much animism as suits his Buddhism.

Those who judge otherwise generally pay full attention to the strength and vitality of Animism, but they give less than due attention to the greater strength and vitality of organised Buddhism. They fail to note the intimate relation of the Buddhist Monastic Order to the life of the community. To this subject we must now turn, not only to accentuate the fact that Burma is Buddhist Burma, but to observe in sufficient detail the essentially religious context of the hope of Nibbāna.

3. *Monastery and Community*

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A monastery suggests to many minds a cloistered company, shut away behind high walls, or secluded on some remote hillside, as frequently in China. In a sense, the Burmese monks are similarly secluded. The monastic building, with its seven-tiered roof denoting sanctity, is generally found just outside a village, set in a bamboo grove or flanked by shady mango trees. Rising to a tapering umbrella point *(hti)* above the trees, there is a *tsedi* or pagoda,[26] which may be painted white or gold. Smaller pagodas are grouped around. Generally within the monastery building, but sometimes outside, there is an image of the Buddha, and probably several others — but always the same Buddha, Gautama, and

[24] Rev. G. Whitehead, *M.B.B.*, p. 37.

[25] *The Syncretism of Animism and Buddhism in Burma*, p. 80.

[26] *Zedi* or *tsedi*, from the Pali, means the offering place or place of prayer. *Paya*, which has also the latter connotation, is more frequently used for larger *zedis* and other shrines. The *zedi* contains relics. Hence it is nowadays often termed a pagoda (from the Singhalese dhagoba — relic (*dhātu*) shrine. But pagoda is not a Burmese term. Cf. Scott, *The Burman*, Vol. 1, chap. XV, p. 186; Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, chap. VII, pp. 128 ff.

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have seen, is a religion of story, and it is essentially the Buddha story, the life of Gautama, rehearsed, recited, pictured, dramatised, told and told again.

"To hear of the Buddha from living lips in this country, which is full of his influence, where the spire of his monastery marks every village, and where every man has at one time or another been his monk, is quite a different thing to reading of him in far off countries.... To hear the yellow-robed monk tell of that life ... is a thing never to be forgotten. A sympathy comes to you from the circle of believers and you believe too.... And as they tell you the story of that great life, they bring it home to you with reflection and comment ... till you forget that he of whom they speak lived so long ago."[65]

Yet Burmese laymen, villagers or craftsmen, let alone monks, will flatly reject any suggestion that the Buddha was divine. Many of them, moreover, will explain their devotion very intelligently. They will make it abundantly clear that Gautama is venerated as a Socrates or a Moses might be venerated. No more. No less. His life was human, and in that very fact they see encouragement for others.

It is not, then, to the conception of the Buddha that we must look for the religious ultimate of Southern Buddhism. Nor is it to the conception of the *Dhamma*, as some have suggested. A highly sophisticated intellectual might conceivably worship the 'Law within' but the Burmese Buddhist is seldom highly sophisticated, nor does he think of the Dhamma as the Law within: it is the Law without, expounded by the *Saṃgha*.

It is elsewhere we must look for the recognition of the Divine. It may perhaps be contained in that looking forward to Nibbāna, which is the goal of all Buddhist aspiration. From what has thus far been remarked of the character of Burmese Buddhism, we can at least expect to find a positive, not a negative, conception of Nibbāna in this context.

Perhaps, too, Buddhism in Burma illustrates, in some degree, what may have been the original emphasis of the Buddha's teaching and the secret of his appeal. Perhaps it has retained or recovered something of that original vitality.

Mrs Rhys Davids has suggested that the Buddha aroused response because he preached a gospel of hopeful Wayfaring from Good to Better, a caravan journey through the worlds, "a pilgrim's progress ... not so much with a load of sin to be discarded, as with an ever growing force of *artha* — the good, the needed, the better."[66] He believed, with the seers of his time, that the Divine was immanent in man,[67] but he saw this

[65] Fielding Hall, *The Soul of a People*, chap. II, p. 18.
[66] *Sakya*, chap. VI, pp. 104ff. [67] *Ibid.*, chap. IV, pp. 69ff.

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APPENDIX

NOTE A

BURMESE *NAT* LEGENDS

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How the Burmese regard the *Nats* is illustrated by an account of the story and cultus of U Yin Gyi, described as 'a national god of the Burmans of Lower Burma.' Written by a Burmese writer, Maung Tha Kin, this account was published in the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Vol. XIV, Part 1, April 1924.

The writer observes that U Yin Gyi is 'quite a young god' compared with the Thirty Seven gods of Upper Burma, but 'he has pushed his way up so pluckily that in Lower Burma at least he has practically superseded these spiritual princes.'

The story goes, according to one version of the legend, that U Yin Gyi was once a young Burmese lumberman in the service of a timber merchant. He was also a very skilful player on the Burmese harp. Timber, hewn and collected in 'enchanted forests,' and formed into log rafts, was brought down the rivers to the town of Dalla. The fairies in the forests were so enchanted by the young musician that on one occasion they clung to the raft and prevented its voyage downstream. The perplexed timber merchant realised that some member of his crew was wanted by the spirit world. Lots were cast and three times the lot went to U Yin Gyi. He was therefore seized, securely bound and thrown overboard.

After this death by drowning and "his birth as a god, U Yin Gyi committed many acts of depredations in the districts... In consequence, U Yin Gyi was given a place in the pantheon of national gods by the frightened populace and regularly propitiated.... The propitiation is done by an offering of vegetarian diet."

Pictured as a cruel, capricious despot riding a ferocious tiger, this angry god was held responsible for diseases and 'accidents that no doctor could cure.' Since the beginning of the present century, however, the people have noticed a change in his behaviour. "He is now believed to have taken to religion, to keep sabbath and to lead the life of a saintly god," observes Maung Tha Kin; "but the people still entertain the belief that his council or assembly of under-gods still do continue to help or harass the people at will as of yore."

The god's new interest in religion does not, however, prevent him showing favour to evil-doers. At least, these evil-doers still expect his help, for it

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is observed that no organised theft, robbery or dacoity is ever committed in Lower Burma without having made offerings to U Yin Gyi and without invoking his aid for protection from arrest and capture. Those who premeditate such a crime mark a 'circular fence' on the ground, using a stick or pouring water to mark the boundary. They remain within the fence until a meal has been cooked and an offering made to the god. "Neither spitting nor answering the call of nature within that period is permitted. Even if unintentionally any of these rules is transgressed by any one of the party, the plan hatched is abandoned." Gamblers and speculators also invoke the help of the *Nat*.

Despite the opposition of some of the monks, public festivals in honour of this *Nat* are maintained. In these festivals U Yin Gyi shares the honours with another *Nat*, Koe Myo Yin, to whom he seems to owe allegiance. The writer describes one of these festivals.

Facing each other at a cross road are two miniature palaces of bamboo and paper. In one of these palaces U Yin Gyi is pictured as a youthful musician, flanked by two ghostly lieutenants.

During the festival there is a play, when the *Nats* are represented by human actors. First they are reverently invited to attend the festival and accept the offerings of food made to them. Then the *Nat*, Koe Myo Yin, comes majestically to the front of the stage, followed by U Yin Gyi. A dialogue follows in which U Yin Gyi is enjoined by his overlord to take due care of the people and protect them from danger and epidemic. U Yin Gyi emphasises his assurances that he will do so by summoning his army of undergods. Then the two Nats depart, "leaving the undergods to partake of the offerings made to them to their hearts content. The undergods, with dishevelled hair, dressed uncouthly in rags, painted with hideous hues and holding divers kinds of mock weapons of warfare, would make a sudden rush from all sides into the midst of the crowd, go to the altars and literally devour the *kauk hnyin* rice and other eatables. Thereafter they would give a merry devil dance, making weird noises and sounds for some time; and depart — bringing the festival aprubptly to an end."

In this account we may note the suggestion that the chief *Nats*, though still capricious, are no longer objects of dread but can be expected to be benevolent, if duly honoured. We may also note the opposition of the more zealous monks to this cultus.

It is interesting to compare this description of a modern *Nat* cultus with stories belonging to an earlier period, told in *The Chronicle of the City of Tagaung*,[1] stories of palace intrigues which show the mingling of legend, Buddhist piety and animistic belief. King Thambawka, it is related, "regarded not the law of truth, he heeded not nor revered the Three Gems"[2] ... nor recked he aught of virtue, piety or holiness, scorned the

[1] *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XI, Part I (1921), pp. 29ff. (translated by Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce; cf. their Introd. to *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*).

[2] The Three Gems, i.e., the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha.

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practice of meditation, learning and love. Therefore because he forgot the law of truth, his glory and dominion waned; his queen broke faith with him, and took her pleasure with the Naga king, by whom she conceived." Her sons were born blind because "the breath of the Nagas had come upon them."[3]

The king soon died, and his successors only survived for brief periods. The Naga king from the spirit world is held responsible for their death. 'Twisting his way into the hollow of the palace post, the Naga prince came to the world of men and reigned seven years with the queen.'

A youth 'from a Brahmin village' resolved to end this state of affairs and seize the kingdom. He prepared himself by religious observance. 'He bathed his body and cleansed it; bowed down and did obeisance, worshipping the Three Gems, his great grandparents, grandfather, grandmother, mother and father, the spirits who keep watch over the great religion, the spirits who keep watch over cities and border villages....'

On his way to the capital, halting at a village 'where of old the coming Buddhas sported and made merry,' the youth is encouraged by the god, Sakra, who 'with his fairy horse and fairy raiment went ahead with the prince in human guise.' Thus assisted, the youth invades the royal town, takes possession and is married to the Queen. Warned by Sakra to be watchful, the youth questions the Queen about the deaths of the previous kings. The Queen then confesses her intrigues with the Naga prince and helps him in a plot to seize the Naga, who is slain by the youthful and zealous conqueror.

NOTE B

BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BURMA

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The chief lessons taught in the monastic schools in Burma are the following:

I. *The Three Jewels:*

I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the Dhamma
I take refuge in the Sangha.

II. *The Five Precepts:*

Not to kill
Not to steal
Not to lie
Not to commit adultery
Not to drink strong drink.

[3] Nagas are "fabulous creatures that sleep deep down below:" *cf.* Scott, *The Burmese*, Vol. I, chap. XXIX, p. 382.

342 of soothsayers (9). Consequently he is naturally
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9. Bedin-saya, derived from Sanskrit, meaning Veda teacher. Judson's Burmese-English Dictionary (Rangoon, 1893), p. 782.

very careful when it comes to the construction of his house. With the aid of the soothsayer the building site must be investigated, the day and hour when to start the construction, and the choice of the timber have to be considered carefully. The shape of the posts, the irregularities of their forms, the knots in the wood where the branches were furnish important clues for the fate of the future occupants. The number of the
342 posts varies in accordance with the size of the
776 house. Usually six posts are erected for the main tract and each post has its own name. One of the posts is considered by most tribes as the seat of the house spirits. In the Burmese house this is the southeastern corner post of the main
[764] tract. The body of a deceased person is always deposited close to it until the coffin arrives. A coconut always hangs there in honor of the Mahagiri-Nat (Min Magayi), the household spirit /Figure 3--Shan house with leaf roof, Southern Shan State of Mongpai (Burmese: Mobye)/ and the coconut must always be replaced when the milk
342 dries up. To avoid bad luck which spirits, liv-
776 ing inside the wood knots, might threaten, the
777 tops of the posts, or at least every third one, are covered with white or red fabric patches; sometimes for good luck, some Thanaka paste (grated rind of Murraya exotica) is smeared on them. Even the clerics do not seem to be immune
346 to the evil influence of these nature spirits,
776 whose origins date back to pre-Buddhistic times,
777 for these protective coverings of the posts can be observed not only at residential dwellings, guest houses, bridges, etc., but also at religi-

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776 ous buildings, such as monasteries, /208/ monastic rest houses and wooden chapels. The burying alive of human sacrifices at the posts of the foundations of the entrances was in old Burmese days considered as an indispensable method of protecting important buildings, such as princely palaces, city gates, bridges, etc. The ghost of the entombed—according to Burmese belief those who have been killed by violence are rooted to the spot where they died--is supposed to watch as a guardian over the building, post, or bridge foundation.

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787 As late as the middle of the past century, more than fifty human beings were buried alive when the foundations for the palace and the city walls of Mandalay were laid. But the protective power of those ghosts was of limited duration. From certain omens it could be predicted that the protection was going to cease, and then it was time to leave the place which was open to disaster. This was the explanation given for the frequent change of residence of the Burmese rulers. The small chapels with their stone images of door guardians at the gates and corners of the walls of the palace area of Mandalay still indicate the locations where these human sacrifices have been buried, though the modern inhabitants will not admit this to a European. At the corners, filled oil jugs were sunk over the buried people; the dwindling of the oil in the containers, which were examined every seven years, foreshadowed an approaching catastrophe in 1880. They tried to avoid this catastrophe with new sacrifices. Nevertheless, it happened. The British occupied the country and the kingdom perished (10).

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782 10. Primarily, according to Shway Yoe, ibid., pp. 482 ff. It is well known that the burying of live sacrifices at construction foundations is a custom, widespread all over the world,